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# Elements of Angling

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H. T. SHERINGHAM.





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# Elements of Angling.

A BOOK FOR BEGINNERS.

BY

H. T. SHERINGHAM.

*Angling Editor of "The Field," Author of "An Angler's Hours," &c.*



LONDON:  
HORACE COX,  
WINDSOR HOUSE, BREAM'S BUILDINGS, E.C.

1908.

*fish*

**LONDON :**

**HORACE COX, WINDSOR HOUSE, BREAM'S BUILDINGS, E.C.**

TO  
WILLIAM SENIOR.

My dear Red Spinner,

In the pages which follow I have tried to give a novice some hints on the art of angling. As to their value there may well be two opinions, and I will quarrel with no man who holds the other. But there is one hint which I have reserved for *this* page, and which I am prepared to defend at the gaff's point if need be. In this open letter to you I would entreat the novice to buy, beg, borrow, or in the last resort, steal, all the books which your pen has given to the angling library. Then let him read them, re-read them, and again re-read. So shall he become not only a better angler, but a better man.

Your obliged and admiring friend,

H. T. S.



My thanks are due to the Editor and Proprietors of "The Field," for kindly allowing me to republish, after revision and with considerable additions, a series of articles which first appeared in that journal. For courteous and practical assistance with regard to the plate depicting pike-tackles, I am much indebted to Messrs. C. Farlow and Co., 191, Strand, W.C., and 10, Charles Street, St. James's Square.

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## INTRODUCTORY.



SEVERAL times of late uninitiated persons have approached me with inquiries as to whether, in my opinion, any gain would accrue to them by admission into the brotherhood of anglers, and if so what would be the best way for them to set about it. The angler, as Walton has informed the world, is "born so"—that is to say, he has a natural disposition for the quiet pleasures of the country, for green grass, clear water, shady trees, and for nature in all her moods ; he has, withal, a decided taste for matching his wits against difficulties, and feels a lively pride when he has done so with success. But these qualities are, of course, not vested solely in the angler as an angler ; many people possess them to the full who have never wetted a line, and who could not tell you the difference between a perch and a roach.



Walton might have called them "anglers spoiled," and he would certainly have tried to persuade them of their error in matching their wits against golf balls and other small deer when they might have been dibbling for chub—not that I would say a disrespectful word about the royal and ancient game; many honest anglers of my acquaintance tell me that it goes hand in hand with fishing very well, and is not really worse for the temper. There are some potential anglers, too, who do not play golf, and who, for one reason or another, do nothing else which would give their natural propensities full scope. They, I take it, are the people who look on at one's fishing with great sympathy but little understanding, and who sometimes express a wish that they had had opportunities of becoming anglers when they were young, regretting that they are now too old to learn.

In this last assumption I think they are wrong, deluded, perhaps, by the popular idea that angling is a mystery, which in its turn is a delusion partly based upon Walton's often-quoted dictum. Angling is not a mystery, though some of its component parts are mysterious. In itself it is the simple process of a person with the proper temperament trying to catch fish with rod, line, and hook, and he

(however badly he does it) is an angler. Therefore it is open to any "angler spoiled" to rectify the error of fate and to turn with profit and pleasure to the pastime for which he is equipped in all but actual knowledge. Nor do I think, in his case, that lack of youthful experience is an irredeemable loss; at any rate, it need not lessen his pleasure, which is the main thing to be considered. And, from instances I have known in which men have taken to fishing long after they were grown up, I do not think it need necessarily affect his eventual skill. Skill after all, given a natural aptitude, is more the result of application and practice than of anything else, and is within the reach of most people who will and can fish enough.

Therefore my answer to the uninitiated who ask what they would gain by becoming anglers would depend on what I imagined to be their mental attitude in the matter. Suspicion that they were merely looking for a new sensation after a variety of other sensations all more or less unappreciated would make me urge the royal and ancient game, or mountaineering, or some other pursuit in which my interest is impersonal, upon them, as presenting greater scope for excitement than does fishing. But in the case of the "angler spoiled" no exposition of profit and loss would really be

necessary ; the fact that he had made such inquiry would prove that he knew for himself what was to be gained. He sighed after some interest to take him out of a troublesome world, after refreshment for his tired spirit, after a tonic for body and soul, and he asked whether angling would prove to be all this, not because he doubted it, but because he doubted himself. I should tell him not to doubt, but to begin fishing at once. One novice of my acquaintance, no longer in his first youth, bought his first rod (not a fly rod) about two years ago ; he now ties his own flies, bristles with theories as a porcupine with quills, and advises me about pike baits. But at the beginning he doubted like anything. Which shows once more that Walton was right, and that I am right too.

The second question, how a would-be angler is to set about it, is more complicated in its issues, for it opens the road to those component parts of the sport which I have admitted to be mysterious, and it requires an answer which must be lengthy if it is to be effective. From the frequency of the question, however, I believe that an answer would be of some small use, and, as one who has been painfully through the mill of apprenticeship, I have set down a few hints for the young angler (youth in angling matters is not, I take it, a question of

years, but of spirit) who wishes to begin at the very beginning, and who, it is presumed, starts without any preconceived ideas on the subject at all. With the many admirable books of instruction on fishing I can, of course, make no attempt to vie; what I have to say will barely serve as an introduction to them, but it may perhaps make reading them later a little more profitable for the beginner. Equally of course, I make no pretence of instructing the practised angler, who has his own store of experience at his back; he instructs himself at the riverside, which is the best school of all. But the absolute beginner needs a few hints before he enters it, and those I have tried to give.

The book makes no pretence of exhausting its subject; there is, for example, much left unsaid with regard to tackle, natural history, and other things which properly receive an angler's attention. Nor is abiding merit claimed for some of the methods suggested; that is to say, experience is quite likely to make a novice discard them for others. But when he feels able to take his own line he may fairly consider himself a novice no longer. What I have chiefly tried to ensure in these pages is simplicity and developement by easy stages—dwelling more fully on beginnings than

on ultimate ambitions. The first salmon may be placed in the last category, but it is for the novice a thing of the future, and by no means so important as the first perch, which is among the beginnings. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.*



## CHAPTER I.

### PRELIMINARIES.

What to fish for—The town angler's ideal—The tackle-shop—The general rod—The reel—A good line—How to put it on the reel—Creel, landing-net, and tackle-book—Floats, gut, and sundries—The pleasure of neat gear—Worms, how to catch and keep them—Making up lines.

THE first thing the novice has to do when he has once made up his mind to become an angler is to decide whether he will confine himself to one branch of the sport, such as trout fishing, or whether he will fish impartially for anything that he can get at. Opportunity will help him to decide this problem. If he lives in a district of trout streams such as Dartmoor, or if he is in the habit of spending all his leisure there, he will naturally find trout fishing to be most worth his while. But if he lives in London or some other great city, and wishes to get his fishing within comparatively easy reach and without too great expenditure of time and money, he will on the whole be likely to get most enjoyment out of all-round angling. The ideal for the city-dweller is undoubtedly to get a day in the

country every week ; and the fewer the hours spent in travelling the more good is to be got out of it. But in most districts trout fishing is not to be had within a short journey of a big town, or at any rate such trout fishing as will give the novice much encouragement in the shape of even moderate success. Also, as a rule, it is very expensive. On this matter I shall have something to say later.

Salmon fishing is attended by similar difficulties to an even greater degree, and in any case I would not counsel the novice to begin with it if he seeks to make angling his principal recreation. Those who begin with the salmon rod are very likely to end with it, and so to miss many pleasures which might have been theirs had they started in less ambitious fashion. Salmon fishing is a dangerously fascinating pursuit ; it tends to make other kinds of angling seem dull unless one has thoroughly grasped their attractions before one takes to it. Few people, however, are so situated that they can begin with the salmon rod, so the point is not very important.

It follows, then, that a considerable proportion of those men who "commence angler," probably two out of three, will be content to angle for fish in general, and will not at first aim at game fish in particular. They will also seek to begin with the

kind of angling which is easiest and most likely to give them a little sport as an encouragement, and they will wish to equip themselves first for that kind before they think of higher flights. In this modest frame of mind they will invade a tackle-shop. Here I would give a word of caution. A frontal attack on the establishment is to be deprecated, for it can only result in great slaughter. Tackle-shops, like salmon fishing, are dangerously fascinating, and the novice who enters one on foot without a plan of campaign is liable to leave it in a four-wheeled cab surrounded by enough impedimenta to supply an angling club. Therefore, he should make his dispositions with care.

He should spend some minutes gazing in at the window, so that his eye may grow accustomed to the glitter and panoply, and he should have supports at his elbow in the shape of an angling friend (a cynic if possible), who can explain to him how unsuited to his immediate purpose most of the things displayed in the window are—that delightful bottle of pink prawns, for example, that shark hook on its glittering chain, that tin box full of resplendent salmon flies, that fly-dresser's cabinet of polished wood—those things are not for him yet. When he has digested these facts the shop may be entered, and the supports should be sent in first, a



reversal of military procedure which is justifiable, if not necessary. The supports should also at first do all the talking, and the main body should listen with attention, for much is to be learnt from a battle of expert opinions.

The first item of discussion will be the rod, and the novice will be invited to inspect a stiff "general rod," made up of two or three cane joints and a greenheart top. Its length will be about 12ft., its weight about 15oz., and its cost may be anything from five shillings to thirty. I have an excellent old rod of this nature for which years ago I gave 6s. 6d.; it still sees service, and is Jack of all trades. For half-a-guinea the novice ought to get a weapon which will do all that is required at first. He should try the rod in his hand, with a reel attached to its butt, and so make sure that it feels comfortable, and he should not accept a rod if it feels at all top-heavy and ill-balanced, if the weight greatly exceeds 16oz. for 12ft., or if the grip of the butt does not suit his hand. By balancing a rod on the finger one can tell pretty well if the weight is properly distributed. If the point of balance is not more than about 18in. from the reel the rod will be pleasant to fish with and will not feel top-heavy. It will be more useful if it has a spare top-joint a foot shorter than the other, which will

practically make a second rod of it, stiffer, stronger, and suitable for more arduous purposes than its other self. Some general rods seem to have about a dozen other selves, what with various tops, spare butts, interchangeable joints, and other refinements. But for the novice these weapons are confusing, and he should avoid them till he feels able to distinguish one from another, and possibly even then unless he is very methodical and clear-headed. Lastly, it is well to see that the canvas bag in which the rod is placed is roomy and allows plenty of space in each partition for the joint which goes into it with its upright rings. Allowance has to be made for shrinkage if the bag gets wet. And it is well to form a resolution then and there, on the threshold of the angling career, never to place the rod back in its case without carefully putting the little stoppers into each ferrule. The resolution will not have much effect, but it is well to make it and to intend to keep it.

The reel, or winch, is the next object which the novice must acquire, and it is probable that he cannot do better than purchase the wooden Nottingham reel, with which the rod was balanced, if its price is not prohibitive. I recommend a good reel, for in some ways the angler is more dependent on it than on his rod; an inferior article, which warps after

the least exposure to damp or whose machinery comes to grief at the least extra strain, is a fearful possession. I have three or four ancient Nottingham reels, relics of the past, which refuse to turn round at all, and they are a perpetual sermon about the follies of penny-wisdom. But I acquired them in days when good reels were not so plentiful as they are now. Besides being good the novice's reel should, I think, be rather large; four inches are not too many for its height, in my opinion, though many anglers are content with something smaller.

There are several reasons for preferring a large reel. For one thing, its weight balances the rod better; for another, it holds more line and winds it in quicker; and for a third, it is more adaptable. You can angle comfortably for small fish with a big reel, but you cannot angle comfortably for big fish, such as pike, with a small one. This point will be made more clear later. It is, then, decided that the novice buys him a 4in. Nottingham reel; it should work on the centre-pin system, and should have an optional check; these mysteries will be explained to him when he is in the shop. He should make sure that the reel is provided either with crossbars or with what is known as a line-guard; I myself prefer the crossbars, which are, I fancy, rather a

modern improvement. As to price, there is almost as much variation in reels as in rods. I have two 4in. reels of the kind described before me ; one of them has an aluminium inner side to its drum, and it cost about twice as much as the other, which is of plain wood with brass fittings. For efficiency there is nothing to choose between them, and both have seen several seasons of hard work. Half-a-guinea is rather more than I gave for the cheaper one, and that sum ought to get the novice a reel of equal or greater merit.

The third requirement is the line to be put on the reel. In this matter, too, there is ample scope for choice (and for confusion) ; but, on the whole, it is best for the novice to aim at simplicity. This I think, he is most likely to achieve with a fine waterproofed or "dressed" silk line, of the size marked F or G in the tackle catalogues. Fifty yards of such a line need not cost more than about 5s., but the best quality would be about twice as much. In selecting it attention should be paid to its appearance and texture ; green is a good colour, though colour does not very much matter, and the texture should be smooth, solid, and pliant ; a sticky line is usually an ill-dressed one, and a line that is too stiff and hard is one which has been dried too quickly ; both kinds should be avoided. The tackle-maker

may suggest an undressed line, but at first the novice should have none of it. Though cheap, it is only suitable for certain special kinds of angling with which the novice will not be concerned for some time ; and, personally, I do not now use undressed lines at all, as I find that a thin dressed line will do all I want.

That, however, is by the way at present. The tackle-maker will probably put the line on the reel for the novice in the shop, but if not here is the prescription for doing it at home. Get a cardboard tube, such as is used for sending prints through the post, or make a similar tube by rolling up a stiff newspaper and tying string round its ends ; over it pass the ring of coiled line just as it came from the shop, and through it pass a walking stick. The ends of the stick are then placed on two chairs, with their backs to the operator, and far enough apart to allow the tube to revolve freely between them. The end of the line is then found and fastened to the drum of the reel (it has occasionally happened that a novice at salmon fishing has omitted to take this precaution, with the result that the first fish hooked ran out all the line and departed with it) by means of a double slip-knot the pieces of silk that hold the coil of line tight are snipped with scissors, the reel is fixed to the rod

butt, and then winding begins. The tube revolves as the line is pulled off it, and so the chance of a kink after the line is on the reel is avoided. Unless the novice is left-handed, he should put the reel onto the butt so that it hangs below it with the handles on the right side.

Rod, reel, and line acquired, there are the sundries to be thought of. They are basket or bag, landing-net, tackle-book or box, floats, gut-casts, hooks, split shot and float-caps, plummets, a fishing knife, a spring-balance, and possibly a camp-stool. A bag, with one partition for fish and another for tackle, is handier than a creel, but the creel keeps fish better in hot weather and displays them to better advantage, which, to my mind, is not unimportant. The sight of fish laid out on greenery in a roomy basket is a pretty one and gives one of those lesser sensations of pleasure which help to make angling fascinating. Therefore I would advise a creel, with a shoulder strap of the broadest webbing, or better, with the new harness, which consists of a strap over the left shoulder and another round the waist. An explanation of the method of adjusting it should be demanded, for it is not immediately obvious. I had many struggles with mine at first, and was painfully reminded of strivings with that bugbear

of the citizen-soldier, the Slade-Wallace equipment. An 18in. creel is not too big for emergencies, as it will hold a mackintosh and other baggage, and a decent catch of fish takes up a good deal of room. Either bag or creel would cost about half-a-guinea; but if the novice is not a light weight and wants a creel on which he may sit, he must pay extra for strength.

The landing-net may cost the same, or less, or more; so long as it will land fish it does not much matter what it looks like. The one with a pear-shaped wooden rim is the pleasantest to use; the folding steel ring is more portable. The handle can be plain, or telescopic with a knuckle-joint and a sling for carrying. For choice, I would have a pear-shaped net with two handles, one about 6ft. in length for ordinary stationary fishing, and the other telescopic for more active proceedings, such as fly fishing. The tackle-book is not necessary, but it is useful. It is a sort of leather wallet, with pockets for hooks, casts, etc., and a partition for a line-winder. It costs from about 3s. 6d. upwards, according to its quality. The line-winder should be included with it—a wooden frame, on which four gut lines can be wound ready for use, with a little closed compartment in the middle for shots, float-caps, and plummet. It is possible to buy

the winder with lines ready furnished on it. But I do not advise that proceeding; it only puts off the evil day, when the novice must learn to furnish lines for himself.

Floats are of great variety and are pretty things, and it is here that the novice will be sorely tempted to extravagance. But let him at first be firm, and content himself with four—two 5in. cork floats of slim torpedo shape and two long porcupine quills, the longer the better. The cork floats may be of any colours preferred; I like those that are red above and green below; the porcupine quills are better with red tops—the top of the float, by the way, is the end without a ring. I have seen young anglers fishing with their floats upside down. I know of no valid reason why they should not if they want to, but the proceeding is apt to give rise to ribald comment. Of gut casts, the novice should purchase half a dozen. Two of them should be strong (“medium lake trout” is the thing to ask for), two should be a size finer, and two should be “finest undrawn.” The tackle-maker will explain these terms, with others of a like nature, if it is desired; but it is more necessary that the novice should at first know what he is to buy than why his purchases have certain names. The length of the casts should be two yards, and they will cost about



8d. each. Hooks of good quality are 1d. apiece, and to begin with the novice will need a couple of dozen in two sizes, one dozen No. 7 and one dozen No. 10 (Limerick bend and scale). The larger hooks (No. 7) should be whipped to gut of the same thickness as the medium casts, the smaller ones to "finest undrawn."

Twopennyworth of split shot, a couple of dozen float-caps, and two plummets complete the list of necessities. It is not amiss to add a few perforated and split bullets about as big as large peas to the split shot, and a few inches of fine indiarubber tubing can be cut into a large supply of efficient float-caps. A plummet is a small rectangular piece of lead with a ring in the top and a cork bottom, costing about 2d. The last items on my list are not vital, but they are very useful. The knife should contain a good blade, a pair of scissors, a stiletto, a close file, and a forked instrument for getting the hook out of a fish, which is called a disgorgers. The spring-balance should weigh by ounces up to 5lb., and is made of nickel or brass, the former material being rather more expensive; 7s. 6d. for the knife and 6s. for the balance should be enough. The total cost of the whole outfit will vary according to individual taste. An expenditure of £5 would ensure everything

being of the best, but if economy is desired, efficient tackle could be purchased for about half that sum. In any case, the initial outlay of a man who wishes to take up all-round angling must be considerable so it is just as well to buy good stuff ; it saves money in the long run.

Moreover, there is a decided amount of pleasure to be got out of good tackle *per se*. A well-tapered, well-balanced, and neatly-finished rod gives its owner many moments of satisfaction quite apart from actual fishing ; a tackle-book of pleasing exterior and well-ordered interior is fruitful of joyous sensations quite independent of the catching of fish ; a telescopic, knuckle-jointed net, which can be shot out and fixed by a single motion of the hand is a delight in itself ; every article in the angler's armoury has its individual value as a source of pleasure at some time or other.

Older anglers of the "rough-and-ready" school may be inclined to smile at these assertions, and to observe that the art of angling consists in catching fish, and not in playing about with tackle or admiring varnish. But I think the novice will do well not to follow the rough-and-ready school nowadays, at any rate too far. There are so many fishers, and waters are so much fished, that he is bound to meet with disappointment if he starts with the idea that a

basket full of fish is the only end of the sport, and an intention to fill it the only justification. Too often the art of angling is its own and only reward, and it would therefore be unwise to reject the "useless trappings" which adorn it. All this is very artificial, no doubt; but we live in an artificial age, and the most of our pastimes are artificial too. Therefore let not the novice be ashamed of taking pleasure in his handsome rod and pretty floats; he has only to listen to the conversation of a circle of seasoned anglers to realise that nine out of ten of them are similarly rejoiced by their gear.

There is one more thing that the beginner must buy, unless he lives in the country, and that is the worms for his first day's fishing. The tackle-maker will be able to supply them, and they should be of two kinds, brandlings and lobworms. Sixpenny-worth of each should be enough, and they will be put into two small bags with a handful of moss, which must not be too dry. Damp moss makes worms bright and tough, but if it is dry it is useless, and they die in it. In hot weather dead worms rapidly become a great offence. It is possible to get special worm-tins, with holes in their lids for ventilation, or it is possible to bore holes in the lid of a small cocoa-tin and to use that. Tin or bag, it does not matter which one uses, but I think

worms live rather longer in a tin. The country-dweller must have his bag or tin, but he need not incur expense for worms. The one kind, brandlings, may be found readily in a manure-heap which is neither too new nor too old—a few turns with a fork will soon show whether it contains worms.

The other kind, lobworms, can be found on the lawn at night, when there has been rain or heavy dew. Catching them makes the back ache, but is sport of a mild kind. The sportsman arms himself with a lighted candle and a watering-pot or small bucket, and then proceeds up and down the lawn, stooping so that the candle throws its light on the grass in front of him. He will soon come on a lobworm lying full length on the grass, and, putting the candle down, will make a grab. At first he will miss his prey, for the worms are very quick at retreating backwards into their holes ; but with practice he will learn to seize them with finger and thumb before they can escape. It is well to aim not at the head, which is on the grass, but at the tail, which is usually just inside the hole. Each worm as it is caught is dropped into the can, and on a good evening a couple of hundred can be caught in an hour. Sometimes a worm when seized will be found to cling tight to its hole with its tail. It should not be pulled out forcibly, or it will

break in two ; but it can generally be " eased " out by a succession of gentle tugs. A small tub or box filled with fairly moist earth is the best thing to keep a stock of worms in. A few can easily be taken out as they are wanted and put in moss for a day or two before fishing. Dead ones should be thrown away at once.

The novice now has both tackle and bait, and is ready to go fishing ; but it is just as well for him to make up his gut lines before he does so, as that is a thing which is most comfortably done at home. In its dry state gut is rather brittle and apt to crack, therefore he begins by putting four of his casts (one thick, two medium, and one fine) and four hooks (two large and two small) into cold water, so that they may soak. After ten minutes he takes out one of the medium casts and a large hook, unwinds the one and attaches the other to it by joining the two loops, thus : The cast loop is passed through the hook loop and then the hook is passed through the cast loop and the two lengths of gut are pulled tight. Next one of the split shot is pinched on to the cast just above the loop, about 18in. from the hook (I always perform the pinching with my teeth, and have been sternly rebuked for it more than once. Tiny pairs of tweezers are sold as a corrective to this habit. *Video . . . pro-*

*boque, deteriora sequor*). Then one of the small bullets is put on above it and pinched like the shot; this will keep it on the cast, but, as it still has a hole through it, it will be able to slip up and down. Next one of the cork floats is put on at the top of the cast, ring first and cap next. It should be run right down till the ring is about an inch from the bullet and then fixed by the cap.

Now can be seen whether the weight is sufficient. A water-butt, or even a bedroom jug, will provide depth of water enough for the test. If the weight of the bullet and shot (which must not touch the bottom) causes the float to stand up with about  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. of its tip out of the water it is about right. If more of the float is visible one or two more shot must be added below the bullet. If the float sinks, a smaller bullet or three or four shot must be substituted for the large one. Where a bullet is not used the shot should be about an inch apart, and a slim 5 in. float will carry from six to ten, according to their size. The line is now made up and can be wound on to the winder. The other lines are made up in the same way, the smaller hooks being attached to the finer casts, which are shotted to carry the porcupine-quill floats—that is to say, with four or five shot. These floats will be too long for the winder, so they can be stuck into the partitions

in the flap of the tackle-case, the casts being wound on without them. Fixing the loop at the end of the cast in one of the notches cut for the purpose in the sides of the winder is sometimes a difficulty. The notch may be too big for the gut, or the cast may not be quite long enough to reach it. I get over this by attaching a piece of fine string or thick thread to the loop and fastening off with that. The novice may not have been able to buy split bullets, as they are not common. In that case perforated ones must suffice, and they must be slipped down the cast before the float is put on. If the hole through a bullet is not big enough it can be enlarged with the stiletto in the knife.



## CHAPTER II,

### A MORNING'S FISHING.

Preparations for starting—The mill-pool—Putting the tackle together—Finding the depth—A bite—Playing a fish—The first perch—Unhooking, weighing, and killing fish—Size of perch—A chub.

NOW that he is equipped for the sport, the novice will naturally wish to begin at once, and the question will arise, "Where?" For the answer I should advise him to consult his circle of friends. Some of them may own pieces of water not too far from his headquarters on which he may make his maiden effort. If not, there are rivers in which he may angle for nothing within reach of most big towns. The Thames is the Londoner's chief hope, but the Lea, Colne, and Ouse, and one or two other streams, are also accessible, and parts of them may be fished either free or for a small daily sum. "The Angler's Diary" will give information as to many fishing resorts. But for all reasons a private stretch of water is to be preferred, and I will assume that the novice is free to angle in the river



belonging to his friend Smith, who, like a wise man, is somewhat cautious about issuing permits, and therefore is able to maintain a good stock of fish. The river is not a big one, and no boats navigate it, but it has plenty of deep stretches, separated by shallows. It contains perch, roach, chub, bream, dace, gudgeon, bleak, and pike, with a few big trout in the mill-pools and tumbling bays. Mr. Smith owns about a mile of both banks, including a mill-pool and a weir and short back-water, and the novice must find out which are the best spots by experience.

He has breakfasted early in the August morning, and is making his final dispositions before starting. His clothing is of sober hue (the trunk of an old willow tree is a good model for angling fashions), his tackle, bait, and lunch are in the creel, with a small piece of soap and a duster; his rod and landing-net are tied together for the journey; his tobacco, pipe, matches, and knife are in his pockets; his mackintosh is on a chair, his broad-brimmed, grey felt hat on his head—he is ready? No, he is not ready. He must go carefully through both creel and pockets to see that the necessities of the expedition *are* where he supposes them to be; otherwise he may later awake to the fact that he is in the country, while his reel or tackle-book is on a

table in London. This, I can assert from personal knowledge, is a very displeasing discovery to make. Also to find yourself at the waterside with tobacco and without matches is a disaster of the first magnitude. Therefore, let the novice make a practice of overhauling his luggage before he starts.

The journey needs no comment, except that it is a blissful thing to see London gradually giving way to green fields, and to step out onto the platform of the wayside station, with its restful country activities, and into the sweet air of a summer morning. Let not delight in his freedom, however, cause the novice to leave his rod or basket or mackintosh in the rack of his railway carriage, lest his joy be turned to mourning. Here also I speak out of a full heart ; there is a blankness about the world when one stands on a country platform, a silly basket in hand, watching the distant train which is carrying one's rod away to alien climes. The novice, however, makes no such fool of himself, but bears his goods proudly, and so arrives at the mill where he is to fish. Here he shows the miller his card of permission, is assured by that honest man that Mr. Jones had rare sport with the chub last Friday, makes no comment on this circumstance, and hurries off to the mill-pool, where I advise him to begin his fishing career. The pool is an oval

about forty yards in length and thirty in breadth at its widest, and it is separated from the mill by a path bridging the mill-race, wide enough for the waggons that come to and fro; a stout wooden railing about 4ft. high runs along the edge of the path, and below is the water, some 3ft. from the top of the wall. From the arch under foot issues the rushing stream of water which turns the wheel. This stream flows straight down the middle of the pool, eventually dividing, and forming a big eddy on either side, which swirls back until it reaches the wall, and so joins the main stream again. The left side of the pool is shallow and open, the other is deep, and is shaded by a row of big willows.

These things are noted as the novice begins to make ready, which he does as follows. First he takes the line-winder out of his tackle-book and unwinds the stoutest gut line on it. This he takes to the left side of the pool and places in the shallow water, so that it may soak while he is putting his rod together. All the gut should be in the water, and if the stream is strong enough to wash it away, in spite of the bullet and shot, a stone may be used to anchor it. Then he returns to his rod and basket. The rod he puts up, fitting the top into the second joint first, and adding the butt afterwards. Before sticking the joints in he will do well to rub

the metal of the male ferrules lightly with the piece of soap which he brought. That will prevent them sticking when the time comes to take the rod to pieces again. Care must be taken in putting the rod "up," as it is called, to get all its rings in line with one another. Next the reel is put on, with its handles on the right side of the butt, as I said before, and then the line is drawn off between the first and second bars of the reel (or through the line-guard, if the reel has one instead of bars) and threaded through the rings. No ring should be missed—a point worthy of insistence; it is very easy to miss one, and the result is often vexatious, as the line refuses to run properly, and sometimes gets hitched up round the missed ring. Also the line should not anywhere be twisted round the rod; that happens sometimes through haste or inadvertence, and the temper suffers in consequence. When the line is threaded a loop may be tied at its end, to which the cast can be attached in the same manner as the hook was attached to the cast. Then the net is screwed into its handle, if this has not already been done, and, lastly, the cast is retrieved from the water, looped to the line, and the engines of war are ready.

The next requirement is the plummet, which is to find the depth of the water. It is put on by

passing the hook through its eye and sticking the point into its cork bottom. The water looks deep, so the float is put up the cast till it is some 6ft. from the hook. Then the rod is taken in the right hand, the line between reel and first ring being held lightly between the first finger and the thumb, the weighted line is swung gently out over the water, and allowed to drop quietly into it. The plummet, of course, sinks to the bottom and takes the float out of sight, for the water in the eddy close to the wall is deeper than 6ft. The float is then shifted 18in. higher up the line—that is to say, to the top of the cast—and this time it cocks properly and does not vanish, which means that the bullet is not on the bottom, though the plummet is, with possibly some inches of the gut. To find out how much gut is on the bottom the point of the rod is gently raised until the weight of the plummet can be felt without its being lifted from the ground. The number of inches between the float-cap and the water will represent the length of gut on the bottom.

For this style of fishing it is better to have the hook just off the bottom, so the float is lowered once more to the right place. Lastly, a lob-worm is taken from the bag, and the hook is passed through it just below its head, and inserted again

about 1 in. lower, so that the point is covered. Then the tackle is dropped in quietly close to the wall about two yards away from the mill-race. Enough line should be pulled off the reel with the left hand to make holding the rod without disturbing the float a comfortable matter. A slight upward movement of the rod makes it run through the rings easily when the finger and thumb of the right hand relieve their pressure.

The novice will soon see that his float is travelling along the wall with the eddy, and at first he should let it travel; but when it gets almost to the race he should check it by holding the rod-point well behind it, and he should keep it in this position for some time. This is a very favourite spot for perch, just between the two currents. Very soon, if the fates are propitious, there will be a bite; the float will bob and seem to struggle against the rod; very likely a violent tug will be felt by the hand. This is a critical moment. Instinct will tell the novice to grasp his rod in both hands, put his back into it, and heave. But he must not do so; he must ease the strain on the line at once. Then the float will go under and disappear, while its owner counts at least ten, not too fast. Having counted, he must raise his rod rapidly, but gently, till he thinks he can just feel a strain at the end of the line; then he must raise it

still more till he is sure of it, and knows that something alive is resisting him. After that he must keep the line between his rod and that something taut, without pulling too hard.

For a time there will be violent jerks at the end of the line, and in answer to each the rod-point must be lowered a little. There may even be a rush into the stream, in which case the line must be released by the fore-finger which has been holding it, and a yard or two will be drawn off the reel by the fish. This line must be wound on again as soon as possible, which will be when the fish ceases to swim in the opposite direction, and to do that the rod must be transferred to the left hand, so that the right may turn the handle of the reel. This is the moment when the line is liable to get slack, but if it is passed safely the rest is easy. The fish gets weaker, its rushes and jerks less powerful, and finally it can be pulled gently to the surface, beaten. The word "gently" must not be taken to mean half-heartedly. In playing a fish it is well to combine the two methods of *suaviter in modo* and *fortiter in re*. At first the novice will not know how much strain his gut will stand, and it is better to err on the side of caution till he finds out, which he will before long. Next, still without slackening line, the novice takes up his net, which

has been leaning on the rail beside him, and dips it into the water, so that with the rod he can draw the fish over and into it ; on no account must he "scoop," at any rate here and now. Then the net is lifted, and the novice's first fish is brought to shore. By its golden-olive flanks, red fins and tail, dusky cross-bars, and big back fin armed with sharp spines, he may know it for a perch.

The justifiable pride with which he stands regarding his first perch in the landing-net is perhaps somewhat tempered by hesitation as to the next move. He has first to get the hook out, a task which has baffled a good many beginners before now, though it is easy enough after a little practice. He starts by kneeling down on the patch of grass under the mill wall, laying his net with the fish in it in front of him and his rod beside him so that there is plenty of slack line. Then he grasps the fish in his left hand firmly, smoothing down the prickly back fin so that it cannot wound him. The hook, he sees, is sticking in the corner of the fish's mouth, and he takes its shank between right finger and thumb. The barb has to be forced back through the hole it has made, and this is a matter requiring some little knack ; a quick, firm push as a rule will do it, with, if necessary, a slight twist as well. If the hook is in a very tough place it may



be needful to work it out by a succession of pushes and twists, but this seldom happens with a perch.

A more frequent difficulty is to find that the perch has swallowed both worm and hook, and in extreme cases it is necessary to kill the fish first and then to perform a surgical operation with the knife. But often it is possible to run the first or second finger along the line and down the fish's throat until the hook is felt. Then with the tip of the finger in the bend acting as a lever, it is a simple matter to get the hook out. Those who hesitate to do this can use the disgorger in the knife in the same way, but the finger is a better instrument, especially for a small perch which is to be returned, as it is less likely to do the fish any serious injury. The novice must know that the perch is a delicate fish, and if it loses blood from the gills or stomach by the extraction of the hook it is not likely to recover. It is therefore more humane to kill a small fish which has bled at all than to return it to the water. Fortunately, with practice the angler learns to tighten on a biting fish in time to prevent its swallowing the bait, and so to avoid the risk of causing it needless injury. A fish hooked merely in the mouth suffers no after inconvenience or even discomfort, as is proved by

the frequency with which fish of different kinds have been hooked twice within a few minutes.

All this, however, is a digression, for the novice's first fish is not to be returned. Hung on the spring-balance (whose hook is placed under the gill cover, so as not to touch the gills), it brings the indicator down to 12oz., which is a creditable weight for a perch. Therefore it is to be killed and placed in the creel.

The best way to kill a perch up to about 1½lb. is to break its backbone by holding it in the left hand and, placing the first finger of the other in its mouth and the thumb just behind the back of its head, bending the head upwards. There is a snap, and death is instantaneous. The operation does not spoil the appearance of a perch, if done properly, but I do not recommend it for other fish, though I sometimes do it with trout when wading up a mountain stream, because it is then the easiest plan. Two or three sharp taps on the back of the head with the landing-net handle or a little weighted stick sold for the purpose and called a "priest" are the best quietus for general use, and they should always be given as soon as the angler has made up his mind to keep a fish.

The perch is now placed on a bed of long grass at the bottom of the creel, the novice rebaits his

hook, and begins to fish once more in the same place. Presently there is another bite, the float goes under as before, and the fisherman tightens again, to meet with no resistance. Pulling up his line, he finds that half his bait has been taken. This argues that the fish was a small one, so it is no great loss. Another worm, another bite, and a little perch is hooked which, when it has stopped struggling at the top of the water, can be lifted out without the aid of the net. It is unhooked, weighed, and found to be 3oz., and then returned gently to the water again, where it swims off merrily. As a broad general rule the novice will do well never to keep perch under  $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. A  $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. fish is in most waters a decent one. In the Thames the size limit is 8in., which means about 3oz., but anglers who are not fishing for gross weight competitions (which are, to my mind, things to be discouraged) can well afford to have a higher standard for their private use. A brace of respectable fish at the end of a day is more to be proud of than a score of little ones. On some waters, on the other hand, the size limit is higher. I know one club fishery where perch may not be retained under  $\frac{3}{4}$ lb., and another where 1lb. is the minimum, and these restrictions are not too severe for club waters, as they are hard fished, and need special

protection. But for public or private waters where the angler fixes his own limit,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. is high enough; he will not often catch too many above that weight. A perch of 1 lb. is a good one, a 2-pounder is a big one, and a 3-pounder is worthy of a glass case. Anything over 4 lb. is an event in angling history.

While we have been gossiping the novice has caught another,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. this time, which has joined its fellow in the creel, and now he is face to face with a new situation. His float got into the main stream, and so worked further out into the eddy about four yards from the wall. Then, without warning, it vanished, drawn under as by a firm hand. The rod was raised smartly after the due interval, and a solid weight was encountered. This suddenly changed into an active and violent resistance, and the fish bolted into the strong stream, swimming with or being carried by it right out into the pool. Taken aback by these events the novice has been perforce content simply to hold the rod up and let the fish pull line off the reel. Now, however, it is twenty yards away, where the current is more diffused and less strong, so he can begin to wind in again, working the fish sideways into the eddy. It comes back fairly quietly until it is almost under the rod, but it is deep down and invisible. Then it makes another dash for the stream, but the

fisherman puts on more strain and stops it. There follows a solemn and sulky circling round and round in the depths, and once or twice a gleam of silver is seen as the fish turns on its side. At last it comes to the top and lies there beaten, looking very big and imposing. The net is under it, and it is landed in triumph. It is a handsome fish, with big silver scales, shading into golden brown on the back, red fins, and a big blunt head; it might be own brother to that chub or cheven which Master Izaak's pupil was so happy to catch, and the spring balance shows it to be  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lb., that is to say, almost a big one. A 3-pounder is a big chub in most rivers, and a fish of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. worth taking in many. But the novice will have more to do with chub later; at present he is lucky to have begun so well, and he may be justly proud of himself even if he does no more to-day, as seems possible, for during the next hour he gets never a bite, though he tries the eddy on both sides of the stream with care and patience.



## CHAPTER III.

### AFTERNOON AND EVENING.

The quiet time—An eel—How to cook a perch—Tea and its uses—A gudgeon—A lost pike—"Caught up"—Dace and roach—A feeding trout—A bream—Drying the line.

THE novice now gets some idea of how time flies when one is having sport, for on glancing at his watch he finds that it is already 2 p.m., and he remembers that he has taken no thought of lunch yet. It is hot in the sun, too, so he removes himself to the willows by the side of the pool, and there, reclining in the shade, eats and rests in great content. From now till about 5 p.m. is the slack part of the day, when fishes meditate and anglers take things easily. But a worm resting on the bottom in the deep water under these trees can at any rate do no harm. The float has to be put a few inches higher, so that the bullet may just touch the bottom. When he is for trying the depth the novice finds that he has lost his plummet. Fortunately he has the spare one in his tackle-case. One always loses one's plummet sooner or later, and

that is why he was advised to purchase two.\* Finally the worm is on the bottom, the rod is resting on a forked twig with its end stuck into the turf; the float is motionless, and the novice drowzes in the pleasant warmth. So wrapped is he in quietude that he does not notice how from time to time his float twitches slightly, remaining still between each movement, nor does he observe how these twitches gradually become bobs, and finally end in the float's slow disappearance. When he first awakes to the situation the float has been under some time.

Hoping for just such another chub as that in his basket, he takes up the rod. At first the hook appears to have got caught in something on the bottom, but on a steady pull it comes away with a live weight at the end of it. For a moment or two the fish, whatever it is, pulls hard, but soon it comes to the top, a long, slim, serpentine shape. The novice has to do with his first eel. He must act promptly or there will be trouble. It is only a small one, so there is no need for the net. He pulls it out of the water, slithers it up the bank, and gets his foot on it just behind the head, all as

\* Having lost the second, which is also a possibility, one can find the depth by calculations, always remembering that if the float lies flat, the shot are on the bottom, with, of course, the gut below them and the hook.

quickly as he can. If he dallied it would tie itself and the line into an appalling knot. It has, of course, swallowed the hook, and I advise heroic measures; let the novice cut the gut with his scissors and push the beast back into the water. It requires a seasoned angler to cope with a small eel and come well out of the combat. The novice has gained his experience cheaply at the price of a hook, for he will know in future what those spasmodic twitchings at his float mean, and he will be able to remove his line from the dangerous spot.

Where one catches small eels one seldom catches much else. Now and again eels go mad, or seem to do so, and bite with an abandon wholly alien to their usual method. I have several times caught a dozen or more at a sitting, every one of them taking the bait with as much vigour as a perch. But this is not usual. Big eels are not to be despised as fighters, and anything of 2lb. or more gives one a lot of trouble. River eels are also excellent eating, of course, as are the perch which the novice has in his basket, and will do well to have on his breakfast table, cooked in their skins and not scaled. Perch are unpopular with the ordinary English cook because, by reason of some perverse tradition, she thinks it necessary to scale them, as laborious a proceeding as plucking a duck.



The chub will give pleasure and a supper to "some poor body," as Walton says. And here I may remark that I have never yet had any difficulty in finding grateful recipients for freshwater fish of the less esteemed kinds. I have heard superior people ask what is the good of catching fish which are of no use when you have got them. One has only to see how gladly many a labourer will accept a brace of fish for his or his children's supper, or how his good wife welcomes such an offering, and one feels that the lofty critic is answered. Criticism is too often merely a statement of a personal point of view.

The novice's first eel disposed of, the next business is tea at the mill house. At the risk of provoking a smile, I feel bound to emphasise the importance of the angler's tea—with country bread and butter, new milk, and possibly home-made jam. I strongly advise the novice never to neglect this simple meal when he is fishing, and to take some trouble, if need be, to ensure getting it. My reason is partly the pleasure of it—a townsman never more fully realises the charms of the country than when he is seated in the parlour of some cottage or simple inn, looking out into an old-world garden, and enjoying the scent of the wallflowers—and partly the use of it. The half-hour's rest after what has

in all likelihood been a heated and strenuous day is very necessary if the angler is to make good use of his evening ; also the hot tea itself is a mild stimulant, just sufficient to refresh a weary man and set him going again. The value of this recuperation is more evident in fly-fishing, but bottom-fishing also has its fatigues ; the mind of a keen angler is always more or less concentrated on his rod and line, and that is tiring in the long run. Therefore, I say once more, let the novice make sure of his tea, wherever he fishes. If he is far from the haunts of housewives and friendly kettles, cold tea in a bottle is better than none at all, or he might, as I sometimes do, take his own little spirit-lamp and kettle with him and brew for himself.

After tea there remain three good hours of daylight, and the pleasantest part of the fishing day, when the air is cooler and the fish more apt to feed. The novice takes up his position once more by the railing and tries for another perch. He does not get a bite for some time, though he fishes close in and far out, letting the float go as far as his rod can reach. Perhaps a change of bait may be effective. He takes off the lobworm, and replaces it with two of the smaller worms from the other bag, running the point of the hook twice through each. I have often found brandlings more effective

than lobworms in the evening. After this the float soon disappears, and a fish is hooked, which turns out to be a small chub of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. It is returned to the water, and so is a little perch which comes afterwards. Again there is an interval, and then comes a bite of rather different character from the last. The float bobs about three or four times before it goes under, and when the angler tightens he feels scarcely any resistance. He has a fish, nevertheless, a little, rather big-headed, round-bodied fellow of bluish-silver colour, spotted along the sides, with a feeler at each corner of its mouth, and about 4 in. long. This is a gudgeon, a fish which is most valuable as bait for pike and perch, though it is not bad eating. It will be worth while dropping it in again on the hook just as it is, on the chance of a big perch fancying it. There; the float is scarcely in the water before it shoots under and stays under. The angler counts twenty this time and then tightens. At once he knows he is into something heavy, which moves slowly and irresistibly out into the pool. Then suddenly the strain on the line ceases and the line comes back, with the hook and some 6 in. of the gut bitten off. The novice has been defeated by his first pike, and must put on a new hook and let it soak while he digests the information that pike have

very sharp teeth, and always make short work of gut unless the hook fastens in the corner of their mouths. Landing a pike on perch tackle is a matter practically of luck, but the angler may assist Providence to some extent by striking sooner if he suspects the biter to be a pike or "jack," as pike under about 4lb. are often called.

The new hook is on and baited, and has been in the water some time when the angler notices something odd about the attitude of his float. It is not quite under water, but nearly, somewhat aslant in the stream. He raises his rod, to find that the hook is fast at the bottom. The golden rule for this contingency is to remember that one's hook was moving with the stream when it encountered the obstruction, and that to free it one must first pull in the opposite direction, getting the rod-point as near the water as possible so as to avoid more upward strain than is essential. In some cases, where one would sooner disturb the fishing than lose the tackle, the rod-point may be plunged right down into the water with good results. In this case, however, no pulling is of avail, and, having tried all directions, the novice decides that he must break. He then lengthens line from the reel till he can get hold of the running-line with his hand. Now for the first time he learns how strong his

tackle is ; it requires a considerable effort to break the gut, but at last the hook-link, being finer than the cast, gives, and repairs have once more to be effected. The knowledge how much strain he may dare to put on his gut is cheaply gained at the price of a hook.

While the new hook is soaking the mill stops working suddenly, and in a few minutes the aspect of the pool is changed. A gentle stream still flows down its centre, but the turmoil and eddies have given place to a smooth expanse of glassy water. Also the depth has dropped quite 6in., and stones and gravel appear at the shallow side where formerly there was water. The novice will do well to lower his float to that extent for fear of another entanglement. He can now fish in the stream, where most of the fish are likely to be feeding, holding his float back as he did before in the eddy. Presently there is a sharp tug, and a fish practically hooks itself. Though not a big one, it is a brisk fighter, and there are constant gleams of silver as it struggles in mid-water. In the net it proves to be rather like the small chub which was caught a while back; but its head is smaller, its back is not so thick, its fins are not red. It is that more graceful fish the dace, and, weighing 6oz., is a fair specimen. Half-pound dace are good ones,

and anything of 1lb. or more is worth stuffing. In most rivers fish of  $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. are worth keeping; there are a few streams where they run big, and where  $\frac{3}{4}$ -pounders are common, but these streams are only few. No fish is more dependent for its growth on plenty of food and good water than the dace. Another bite soon follows—a slower, more cautious attack, which ends, however, in the float going under. It is a bigger fish this time, and, though not so active as the last, it gives some trouble before it can be netted. Here is yet another species, silvery like the dace, but deeper, red-finned and golden-eyed. This is a 1lb. roach, and a good example. Roach grow up to about  $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb.; a 2-pounder is a "specimen," and a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -pounder does a basket no discredit.

Now that it is safe in the creel, let the novice note those little bubbles coming up in strings here and there in the still water to the right, and, having noted, let him drop his float in among them, for they argue a shoal of bream a-feeding. It may be some time before he gets a bite, and he has leisure to look round him. Over at the far end of the pool on the shallows are many quiet rings being made, with an occasional wave as a big fish moves along near the surface. Those are signs of chub rising, as they always do on a warm evening when the

mill has stopped. Away on the right by that clump of rushes a shoal of small fry suddenly jumps out of the water in a panic. That means a feeding pike, possibly such a one as that which took the hook. Then, right in the middle, there is a sudden plunge and splash, repeated in a moment or two a few yards further off; that is one of the big trout, a cannibal like the pike, but vastly more cunning. Some day perhaps the novice may—but where is his float? Intent on the trout, he did not see how it slowly but steadily subsided. The bite of the bream is one of the most leisurely things in river fishing, and its play, as the novice finds on tightening, is one of the most solemn. The fish bores heavily about, makes one good slow rush, and then gives in to the hard strain of the bending rod. He is a big bronze fellow of 3½ lb., very thin in the back, deep in the flank, and with a long anal fin. His capture makes a very satisfactory ending to what for a novice has been a very satisfactory day. He has had practical experience now of what it means to have a fish on the rod, and he has learnt something of the habits of eight different inhabitants of our waters, which is a good beginning.

One or two more things remain to be done as a conclusion to the first day's fishing after the novice

gets home. The worms, for instance, if any quantity of the original stock remain, are worth preserving against another occasion, and they should be taken out of their bag or tin and put into the tub or box of earth mentioned earlier. Otherwise they may be forgotten and only recalled to mind when they have become a public nuisance. This is, if possible, to be avoided. In most domestic circles an angler is viewed with something akin to suspicion, as a person who disturbs the even tenor of household ways. Dead worms might undoubtedly tend to give colour to accusations founded on this suspicion.

Another thing to be attended to is the drying of the line, or so much of it as has been in the water. The back of a chair can be used for this purpose, and the novice should coil the line on it by walking round and round the chair, reel in hand, and so pulling the line off; the line should not be pulled off with the hand and then coiled round the chair, because this after a time or two of drying tends to put a kink or twist in it, which may ultimately become a nuisance. This line can be wound back on to the reel in the same manner next morning. Better than the chair back is a "line-dryer," a square frame of light metal or wood which is turned on an axle by means of a handle: fastened



by its own little vice to the corner of a table, it winds the line straight off the reel without any risk of kinking. I find my line-dryer (which cost about four shillings) extremely useful when I want to change a line from one reel to another, or to take it off for any purpose. The novice, however, has no such need at present.



## CHAPTER IV.

### SPECIALISING.

Bad days—Need for adapting method to circumstance—  
Different fish to be differently attacked—Roach fishing  
—Ground-bait and hook baits—A roach swim—How  
to fish it—Roach bites—Tight-corking—Baiting a  
bream pitch—Baits for bream—Need for a longer rod  
for roach and bream—Fine-drawn gut and single hair—  
A few more baits.

THE sum of the novice's knowledge, after his first very successful day's fishing, is now considerable. He has learnt the principles of float fishing, of the manipulation of rod and reel, of playing and landing fish, and he knows that many different kinds of fish will in certain circumstances bite at a worm. But it may be that he is not yet sure of all his lessons, in which case he would do well to visit the mill-pool again, and endeavour to repeat his experiences of the first day. Whether he will do so no man knoweth; the ways of fish, their moods, and their inconstancy are too mysterious for light prophecy. At any rate, the

young angler can fish the same places in the same manner, and do his share in persuading history to repeat itself. If he has plenty of leisure he can devote several days to assimilating thoroughly the alphabet of the craft which he has learnt as yet but superficially. They will not be wasted, for, while they will make him more and more familiar with his rod and line, they will also teach him something else which it is well for him to know—the inevitableness of bad and blank days. Even on Mr. Smith's well-stocked water one does not always fill one's creel with fish. Some blazing Saturday afternoon, perhaps, when the mill has stopped and the water is glassy, and so clear that the bottom can be seen, the novice will be able to look down on shoals of fish, red-finned roach poised head downwards scarcely a foot below the surface, striped perch swimming languidly about in mid-water close to the wall, and very dark shapes motionless close to the bottom, which are, possibly, the bream. Now and then a burly chub will come into view, drifting like a log practically on the surface. Such a spectacle of fish life is very fascinating; but the novice will not find much sport under these conditions. Not a fish will even look at his worm, suspended on the strong gut below the painted float, and the only effect of his angling

will be that after a time the shoals will gradually melt away until not a fin is within sight.

Such a day and water are not very propitious for any kind of fishing, and for the novice's worm and strong tackle they are hopeless. But there are ways in which a few fish could be secured even now, and the novice will see the necessity of studying them. In a word, he has laid the foundation of his general knowledge, and he must now begin to specialise. He has so far been fishing for fish in general; he now has to angle for fish in particular, bearing in mind the fact that, though his first method, tackle and bait are well enough on occasion, they are not adequate at all times. Nor in the long run does it pay to fish for fish in general; the most successful angler is he who fishes for perch or chub or roach, or whatever it may be, and who adopts the methods most suited to his special quarry. These methods are very diverse, and it is wiser to master them one by one than to attempt to learn them all together; it is wiser, too, to progress by natural and easy stages, to make acquaintance with different kinds of float fishing before beginning with the fly or spinning tackle.

Among the different kinds of fish which the novice has already caught, the perch alone can be

said to have been properly approached—that is to say, the angler went perch fishing, and by chance secured other fish as well. But by rights the other fish should not have come to him. The chub, for instance, took his bait too close at hand; the roach and dace should have found his gut too thick; his hook was too large for the gudgeon; while the bream ought by theory to have required an offering of ground-bait before it would feed. The eel was to be expected as a natural result of fishing on the bottom with a worm, while the pike was a logical consequence of having a live gudgeon on the hook. The next time the novice goes perch fishing he will very likely catch nothing but perch, especially if he fishes only in perch holes (round old piles, flood-gates, walls, and weirs; under steep clay banks where there is deepish water and a gentle current, or near the roots of willows which overhang deep water) with perch baits, worms, and live minnows or gudgeon, which are hooked only through the lip.

If he wants, say, roach, he must go roach fishing, and in the following manner: First he must make ground-bait. A stale loaf with the harder parts of the crust cut off is put to soak in a pan of water until it has become thoroughly sodden; then it must be squeezed with the hands until as much

water as possible has been wrung out of it and poured away, and then it must be kneaded energetically into a stiff pudding with a plentiful admixture of dry bran; the stiffer it is the better it will serve. The ground-bait is best carried in a linen bag. For hook bait, bread paste is good enough, but threepennyworth of "gentles" (*Anglice* maggots) may be purchased as well from the tackle dealer. Personally, I have generally found paste better than gentles in summer, and gentles than paste in winter, but there is no invariable law. Worms, as a rule, are of little use for river roach in summer, but are good in winter, especially when the water is thick. Little hungry roach in ponds will take worms at all times.

Bread paste is easily made by putting a piece of stale crumb into the corner of a strong, clean cloth, soaking it in clean water, and then squeezing the water out by screwing up the cloth. It should come out about the consistency of putty, or a little stiffer. A piece about as big as an orange will last an ordinary day's fishing. Having, then, his ground-bait, paste, gentles, and tackle, as before, with the addition of a camp-stool, the novice will proceed once more to Mr. Smith's fishery. This time he will pass by the mill, cross the meadow beyond, and come to the weir-pool. Below the pool is a

stretch of gravelly shallow, and below that a narrow neck where the river flows deep with a steady, quiet current between two narrow beds of sedges. This looks like a good place for a beginning, and the camp-stool is put down about a yard behind the sedges. But it is necessary to put up the tackle and plumb the depth before making sure of it. This is soon done, one of the fine gut lines with a porcupine quill float being attached to the reel line. Then the depth is tried about 5ft. out from the rushes, first as far up stream as the rod can reach, then immediately opposite the camp-stool, and then down stream again as far as the rod can reach. Between the two farthest points is the "swim" which he will fish. The water is found to be about 5ft. 6in. deep in each place, which means that the bottom is even. Also the plummet could be felt to strike the bottom, which shows that it is gravel. The float is fixed so that the hook shall be in. from the bottom.

Now the angler lets his line soak while he ground-baits. He begins by squeezing off half a dozen balls from the big lump, each about as big as a tangerine orange. Into each he puts a pebble to make it sink. Then he throws them into the river in line with the spot where he first took the depth, and about four yards above it. They should reach the bottom just

above the swim, and as they melt the fragments should be washed down into it, and make the fish feed. Lastly, the angler baits his hook with a pellet of the bread paste just large enough to cover it, and moulded to its shape, so that the point of the hook is scarcely hidden, swings his line out over the water (there is a knack about this which needs practice; the motion should be steady, without a jerk, lest the bait fly off the hook), and begins to fish. The float has to cock at the spot where he first took the depth, and to travel without interruption down stream as far as the length of rod will allow. Between the rod-point and the float there should be about two yards of line, and the rod should be held high, so that only a few inches of this line are in the water. The reason of this is soon apparent. At the second swim down the float bobs, and then seems to be going steadily under. But it never gets under; the fish lets go, and the angler raises his rod-point too late. Roach do not take paste as perch take a worm; they suck it into their mouths, and often eject it immediately, the only sign of the bite having been a slight stoppage or dip of the float. Therefore the angler must always be on the alert, and ready to raise his rod-point the instant he detects a bite. There, at the next swim down the float dipped, the rod-point went up, and



the novice is playing a half-pounder, which is duly basketed. A little later the float goes right under, and a second roach of  $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. is the result. Sometimes the fish bite more boldly, and even swallow the bait ; but, as a rule, their attack is short and sharp. After half a dozen fish have been caught bites will become less frequent, and then another ball or two of ground-bait may be thrown in.

Roach have other ways of biting besides the obvious one which draws the float straight down in the water. Now and again the float will simply stop, as though the hook had caught in a weed or something at the bottom, and this may denote a bite, though oftener it *is* due to a weed. Sometimes again the float rises up out of the water in a queer manner and even lies flat ; this means that a fish has taken the bait and then gone up with it towards mid-water, so raising part of the shotted line and freeing the float of some of its weight. This kind of bite I have generally found to be due to a small roach, but bream also do it occasionally, and so do those freshwater sprats, the bleak, which are a great nuisance in a roach swim. Another bite which the novice must be ready for is not so easy to recognise, especially if there is any wind. The float may perhaps be seen going along with the stream, but slightly aslant and moving a trifle

quicker than the current; this means a fish, as, of course, does a similar movement across or against the stream. Most of these kinds of bite will occur during a long day's roach fishing, and it is often difficult to detect them when they are not very well marked.

At last there comes a time when there are no more bites at all, or when they have dwindled to the merest twitches at the float, which I believe often to be due to fish pushing the bait with their noses and not taking it. If the swim has been yielding good fish it is then worth while to try "tight-corking," as it is called. To do this in his present swim, which is 5ft. 6in. deep, the angler must move his float up the line till its cap is about 6ft. 3in. above the hook; then he drops his hook in down stream, rests his rod on the sedges in front of him, and lets the bait settle down to the bottom. The float held back by the rod-top will be at an angle against the stream, and at a bite will either begin to go under in a slanting direction or become more upright and then go under. For this kind of fishing a bigger piece of paste may be used. I often use one as big as a hazel nut, and find that the fish take it boldly, sometimes even jerking the rod-top down to the water. Bigger roach will often take a bait lying on the bottom.

If even tight-corking produces no bites after about half an hour the angler may try another swim. It does not matter much where he selects it so long as it has a good clean bottom, a steady stream, and is not less than about 3ft. deep. If it is as shallow as this the ground-bait should be thrown in in very small pieces, so that it may scatter at once. Often a bite will follow the first swim down after a few pieces of ground-bait have been thrown in, and often in shallow swims it pays to put a piece of ground-bait on the hook instead of paste, and a good big piece. I remember once taking a big basket of roach in about 3ft. of water by throwing in two or three pieces of ground-bait as big as nuts before every swim, and baiting the hook with a similar piece, while another angler only a few yards away, fishing in the ordinary way with paste and ground-bait thrown in in balls, hardly caught anything. The novice will find ground-bait difficult to use, as it washes off the hook so easily; but this is to some extent compensated for by the bold bites that it produces.

In a fishery like Mr. Smith's it is well for the roach fisher to be alive to the possibilities of catching bream as well, and it is not a bad thing, at some time when the roach are not biting very eagerly, to "bait up" a bream hole for the evening. Taking

his rod and putting the plummet on his hook, the novice must look for a likely spot. He need not go very far from his first swim. About twenty yards below it the river widens and forms a big pool with an eddy on either side. Just at the top of the pool the bed of the river shelves rapidly, and it is possible to sit at the corner and fish in about 8ft. of water just where the eddy meets the main stream. Bream are best fished for by tight-corking, with the bait well on the bottom, so the ground-bait can be dropped in as nearly as possible in the same spot. Half a dozen balls as big as oranges, with a stone inside each, are not too many, for bream are hearty eaters, and are not so easily satisfied as roach. And when the angler returns after tea he may throw in three or four more, for the chances are that the bream (if they are in the pool) will have eaten up all the first consignment, and have gone away again. More ground-bait, however, will attract them back, and if the angler sees the bubbles alluded to before coming up from the bottom he may be hopeful of bites. His bait may be either a big piece of paste (the largest bream I ever caught took a lump as big as a small walnut), an equally big lump of ground-bait, or eight or nine gentles. Or—and this is, I think, a matter of local taste on the part

of the fish—worms may prove to be a better bait than anything, lobworms when the bream are biting eagerly, and brandlings when they are less enthusiastic. Generally speaking, bream bite best in the evening, or in the early morning at about sunrise, a time which the novice will not always find very convenient. If he is able to imitate the lark he should bait his bream hole overnight.

Some anglers think that bream will scarcely bite in the daytime at all, but I have not found this to be the case. It depends, I think, very much on the tackle used. With fine tackle I have often had excellent sport in the hottest part of the day. This reflection brings me to a matter on which I have not hitherto touched, the advisability of the novice now adding to his equipment. If he is pleased with his first day with the roach and bream he may think it worth while to explore this kind of fishing further. In the first place he will want a longer rod. Very likely he will have realised this already from having experienced some difficulty in swinging his line out over the rushes with his 12ft. rod. It is much easier to attack roach and bream with a long rod. One is able to fish comfortably in deep water, and to command a longer swim. A rod of 16ft. is not too long for the purpose; it must be stiff, with a certain amount of play in the top joint,

and as light as it can possibly be made. Lightness is usually the difficulty, and the only kind of rod I have ever found really to meet my purpose has been one of the cheap Japanese canes. A good one can be made into a first-rate roach-rod by being fitted with rings and winch fittings, and by the addition of a new top in place of its own flimsy one. It is not easy to find just the right cane, but being found such a rod is a treasure, and even with the additions specified it need only cost a few shillings. There is a kind of rod known as the roach-pole, a hollow cane affair, very long, very stiff, very big in the butt, rather expensive, and, to my mind, very cumbersome. I should recommend the novice to have nothing to do with it, as its use is a science in itself, and needs a special apprenticeship.

Another requirement for further pursuit of roach, and sometimes of bream, is finer gut. So far the novice has been using what is known as undrawn gut. This is, as a rule, good enough for perch, chub, bream, and nearly all fish except roach and dace. But for roach nearly always, and other fish sometimes, it is well to have finer tackle in reserve, and to keep a stock of "drawn" gut casts and hooks. Drawn gut is gut which has been made fine by artificial means, and, of course, it is not nearly so

strong as the natural gut. It can be got in five grades (1x to 5x), and the finest is not too fine for roach fishing in rivers where the fish are at all shy. Its use requires a light hand, and at first the novice is bound to have disasters now and again. But when he has got accustomed to it he will find his catch of fish much improved. Single horsehair, either white, cream-coloured, or chestnut, is also good for roach fishing. Good round hair is about as strong as 5x gut, and is very elastic. I prefer it to gut, as it does not fray with use as gut does, but it is more liable to break for no obvious reason. Whether it catches more fish than the finest gut anglers are not agreed; it certainly does not catch less. For other fish which grow to a big size, such as chub and bream, the novice may consider he is fishing very fine if he is using 3x gut, but with care and time it is possible to land a 3lb. chub or 4lb. bream on the finest gut of all, or on hair. One must not be in a hurry, and one must not try to force the fish to the net till it has exhausted itself.

There are a few other baits for roach and bream which the novice will find worth knowing. Wheat stewed slowly till it swells up and cracks down one side is excellent in most rivers; one grain on the hook is enough for roach, and two or three for bream; little cubes of bread crust (not too tough)

about  $\frac{1}{3}$  in. square, are also good; boiled potato is sometimes killing for bream; wasp grubs in their season are capital, and exotic baits, such as boiled macaroni, pearl barley, and even rice, are occasionally used with success. Lastly, an admirable bait for roach is a large, ragged piece of the crumb of a stale loaf. It sinks very slowly, and is often seized greedily before the float has cocked. But it is not easy to use, as it comes off the hook at the slightest provocation. Lastly, whatever bait is used care should be taken to put it on so that the point of the hook can readily come out, and penetrate the fish's mouth; it does not do, for instance, for the point to be guarded by a tough shield of crust or the skin of the grain of wheat.





## CHAPTER V.

### FISHING AT A DISTANCE.

Float-casting for chub—To make the line float—Baits for chub—Bream fishing on the Broads—Bubbles—Rudd—Surface baiting for rudd—Where to fish for them and how—Fishing in the Nottingham style—Legering—Barbel—Baiting a barbel swim—Uncertainty of the sport—Big barbel—Carp—Their artfulness—Baits for carp—Fishing for carp in shallow water—Potato and baiting needle—Fishing on the surface—Tench—Baits and methods.

So far the young angler has been on fairly intimate terms with his fishing, that is to say, he has never been very far away from his float and hook. But there are times when to achieve good results he will have to fish a long way off. In Mr. Smith's mill-pool, to give an illustration, he will remember that the chub rise in the evening in the far distance, thirty yards or more away, and to catch them he would have to get his bait there. When the mill-wheel has stopped working and the pool is practically still, with only a very gentle current running for a few yards before it is merged in the deep eddies, the chub could only be reached by

throwing the float and bait out to them. Even a practised angler would not find throwing so far child's play unless the float and shots were very heavy, and the novice would be well advised to aim at something less ambitious as a beginning. He might, for instance, go round the left side of the pool and cast into it from the gravel. From there it would not be more than fifteen or twenty yards to the spot where the fish are, and with a little practice he might manage so much. The first thing for him to do is to inspect the ground at his feet and make sure that no twigs or sticks cumber it; then he must pull some ten yards of line off the reel below the first ring, letting it fall to the ground in loose coils as he does so. Having pulled enough line off, he must rearrange it, picking it up and recoiling it so that the top coil is the one nearest to the ring. This done he can essay his first cast. With the rod in his right hand, the line between finger and thumb, and the float hanging about 5ft. below the rod-point and 2ft. above the hook, which is baited with half a dozen gentles, he swings the bait backwards and forwards until he feels that it has acquired enough momentum; then he releases the line from his finger and thumb and the float and bait fly out over the water, picking up the coils of line as they go.

The main precautions necessary are to see that the coils of line do not catch in obstructions on the ground, and to avoid anything like a jerk in casting; a steady swing, with the line released at the proper moment, will carry the float a long way, but too much force or a jerk will probably only result in a bad tangle. After practice the novice will find himself getting his line out satisfactorily, and when it has got far enough he can let the float stay. After a longer or a shorter time it will disappear if the chub are in the humour, and then the angler will pull in his slack line until he can just feel the strain, when he tightens and hooks his fish. Some bites he is sure to miss, because the line sinks in the water after the float has settled, and it will not always be possible for him to gather in the slack quickly enough before the fish has let the bait go. An experience or two of this kind will probably make him reflect that it would be a good thing if the line did not sink.

There is a method of making it float which is useful, and that is to anoint it with vaseline or some kindred preparation—I generally use a material called Gishurstine, which can be procured through most of the tackle-makers. A rag smeared with the ointment can be run up and down so much of

the line as is to lie on the water, and its effect will be excellent—for a time. I have not found the method to answer for a whole day's fishing, but it lasts for an hour or two, and the rag can be applied again from time to time if the line shows a tendency to sink. I have suggested gentles as the bait for the style of fishing; but if chub be the quarry an even better bait is paste made up of bread and cheese; it sticks very well on the hook if it be not too soft, and chub are very fond of it. I generally make my bread-paste first, and add a small piece of cheese to each pellet as is required. Chub like a big mouthful, and a piece as big as the bowl of an egg-spoon is not too large. Other chub baits are small frogs, tiny eels, or elvers, as they are called when migrating, strawberries, cherries, slugs, caterpillars, and, in fact, anything. I have caught them on every bait I ever tried, I think, not excluding pike-baits.

The method described is not applicable to chub fishing only. All fish are at times best approached from a distance, especially when the water is not deep. In the shallower broads of Norfolk it is the usual thing to fish for bream, roach, and rudd twenty or thirty yards away. This is due to the fact that one cannot approach the shoals of fish in a boat without alarming them. When the water is not much more

than three feet in depth and clear to boot one has to proceed cautiously. I have found the best plan for bream in such a spot to be ground-bait and patience. One throws the former in liberally twenty yards or so from the boat, and then exercises the latter till the fish have been attracted. They themselves give information on the point by nosing about at the bottom as they feed and sending up strings of bubbles to the surface—small bubbles. An isolated occurrence of large bubbles is, I think, no clue to fish, though force of tradition makes five anglers out of six say, "there is an eel," when they see the phenomenon. Sometimes an eel may be responsible for it, but usually, I believe, it betokens nothing more than an escape of gas from the mud. A shoal of feeding bream, however, is not easily to be mistaken; the bubbles are too numerous and too frequent, and are to be seen all over the area which has been baited. In still water it is better to throw the ground-bait in loose, or at any rate in very small lumps; so it makes more of itself. A bucketful is not too much for baiting a bream pitch.

A different method of baiting is employed for that very handsome fish the rudd, whose acquaintance the novice has not yet made. Something like a roach in general appearance, it has points of difference. In the first place its general colouring is

much more golden, and both fins and eyes are of a more brilliant red. In the second place it is deeper in the flank and of a rounder profile—more like the bream in fact. In the third place it has a recognisable physical trait by which it can be distinguished from its cousin; its back fin instead of being set almost immediately over the ventral fin is a good way behind it. But there is no risk of confusing the two when they are set side by side, the rudd being a golden fish and the roach a silver. The rudd grows to be three pounds or even more, but a fish of two pounds and a half is a big one. Sometimes it will feed near the bottom and take the baits used for roach and bream, but in hot weather it more often has to be sought near the surface after the following manner.

The fish are generally found at the edge of beds of reeds or rushes, among which they feed, and one has to tempt them out before one can get at them. The thing to do therefore is to moor the boat twenty yards or more from some little bay in the rushes which looks a likely spot and into which the wind is blowing. Then pieces of dry bread are dropped overboard and drift into the bay, being brought up by the rushes. If the rudd are there and in the mood it will not be long before they find the bread and attack it vigorously. Then the

angler casts his float and baited hook into the middle of the turmoil (the line being greased in the manner before described), and the fun should begin. The float must be a heavy one, carrying at least two bullets rather larger than peas, or it will be difficult to cast it so far, and the hook should not be more than eighteen inches below it. The bait may be a bunch of gentles or a good big piece of bread paste, or sometimes a worm.

The rudd is a bold biter and the float goes well under on its attack. The angler strikes sharply when it does so and on hooking his fish holds it pretty hard so that it may not bolt straight into the rushes. It is impossible to use very fine gut for this style of fishing, owing to the weight of the tackle and the force required to hook the fish so far off. Fortunately the rudd is not shy and does not seem to mind. What is known as a self-cocking float is useful for this kind of fishing; it is weighted at the lower end by lead inside, or lead wire wrapped round it. No weight is required on the cast with this float, and it does not make quite so much splash when it falls into the water. Sometimes rudd may be found away from the rushes out in the open water and then one casts out one's bread and follows it and the fish about.

The rudd is not very widely distributed in

England, being chiefly found in the Broad country and the Fens. The Ouse is the chief river which contains the fish, but a certain number have been introduced into the Thames, without much result as yet. There are rudd in Ireland too, where the fish takes the place, and sometimes the name, of the roach.

The other method of float-fishing at a distance is what is known as "Nottingham" fishing, so called, I believe, because the anglers of the Trent were the first to practise it. It consists in letting the stream carry the float off for twenty yards or more, and so getting a very long swim. It has its difficulties, one being that of getting the line to run out smoothly and easily without checking or jerking the float, another being that of hooking a fish twenty yards or more away, and a third being that of seeing one's float in the distance. The first and second may be to some extent lessened by using a heavy float and a light running line of undressed, or rather un-waterproofed, silk. Some anglers use a plain white silk line and rub it with deer's fat or vaseline to make it float. Others give their line a partial dressing, which makes it buoyant, and lines so prepared can be bought at the shops. I have one which answers fairly well, but its floating qualities are not everlasting, and it gets



hidden after two or three hours. Nottingham fishing, however, is not, I think, very profitable for the novice ; if he will try it, let him get some experienced friend to give him an object-lesson, explaining the uses of the free-running reel, the strength of the "strike" required to hook a fish, and the art of ground-baiting a long swim. Or if he has no friend who knows about it, let him make his first trial by dropping his float into a strong stream such as that in the mill pool when the wheel is working. After he has pressed back the knob which puts the check on his reel, he will find that the strain of the water will pull line off without any assistance from him ; indeed, he may have to use a finger as a brake to prevent the reel going round too fast, and over-running. In a slower stream he may have to help the float by pulling line off, and easing it through the rings with slight upward pulls of the rod-top. When the float has travelled as far as he desires, he simply winds the line in again, and repeats the process. A good deal of force in raising the rod-point is necessary to hook a fish twenty yards or more away, therefore he should not attempt to use fine gut until he has had plenty of practice.

Yet another mode of fishing at a distance is "legering," a proceeding which the novice will find

easier and more productive than the last. It consists in angling on the bottom without a float, and trusting to the hand instead of the eye for intimation of a bite. The novice can easily make himself a leger line by pinching a shot onto his cast about 18in. from the hook, and then slipping one of his perforated bullets down the cast above it. One bullet is heavy enough for a slow stream, but for a fast one two, or even three, will be necessary. The baited hook is cast out either down or down and somewhat across stream, the line being coiled in the manner already described. When the bullet has reached the bottom slack line is wound up until the weight of the lead can just be felt from the rod top. Then the angler awaits a bite, which usually takes the form of a sharp tug or two. The moment I feel a bite I generally relax the strain for a second, so that the fish may not become suspicious from resistance. If the bait is a lobworm I give it two or three seconds until I feel that the line is being drawn away, tightening when it seems probable that the fish has got the bait well in its mouth and is making off with it. Even when legering for roach it is not necessary to be in a hurry; the fish bite much more boldly at a bait on the bottom. All fish can be caught by this method, and practically all the baits hitherto enumerated

can be used in it. The very tender ones, such as wasp grub and dry bread are, of course, not easily managed ; therefore, as a beginning, let the novice content himself with a worm or a bunch of gentles, baits which all fish will take, and which do not easily come off the hook.

Legering is the method usually employed in fishing for barbel, a big reddish fish with feelers at the corners of its mouth which feeds strictly on the bottom. The barbel is only found in the Thames, the Trent, and some of their tributaries, and it is a singularly capricious fish with abnormal powers of resisting the angler's wiles. I have, indeed, been sometimes tempted to think that barbel do not feed every year or even every alternate year. Certainly many a season goes by without any sport worth mentioning being recorded. In some places, where barbel are known to exist in quantities, never a one is caught, though anglers fish for them assiduously and bait swims in the most lavish manner.

Baiting a barbel swim is a serious and expensive business, for it involves lobworms, which have a market value of about a penny for ten. It is not much good trying to bait a deep Thames swim with less than a thousand worms, and the enthusiastic barbel-fisher uses two or even three thousand before he is satisfied, putting in a thousand on the first

evening (either loose or enclosed in balls of clay if the stream is very rapid), five hundred on the second, another five hundred on the third, and so on. After the swim has been thus fed for several days he expects, small blame to him, to get some return for his trouble and expenditure. He fishes the swim by mooring his punt twenty to thirty yards above it, and casting his leger-tackle down into it. The gut should be fairly stout (the novice's first line and hook will do well enough) and the bait a small lobworm. If the stream is strong, as it usually is in a Thames barbel swim which may be ten feet deep or more, a flat leger-lead specially sold for the purpose will hold the bottom better than bullets. A special leger-trace with a short length of gimp, on which the lead runs, in the middle of it is also sold, and it is worth having. A heavy lead frays gut very badly, and the little piece of gimp on the bottom cannot be very visible to the fish, especially as it is at least two and sometimes three feet from the hook.

When he begins to fish the angler may get a bite almost at once, a preliminary to remarkable sport, or he may not get a bite at all. When the fish are really on the feed they are caught in great quantities, a catch of twenty in a day running from three up to seven or eight pounds being nothing uncommon.

A big barbel is a very powerful fighter and gives great though rather solemn sport. The novice should hold him as hard as he dares, but should be ready to let him have line if necessary, taking care never to let him have it slack. The finest battles with barbel fall to the roach fisher, who often in striking at a supposed roach-bite hooks a barbel foul. A fish of five or six pounds so hooked on fine roach tackle will often take half an hour or more in the landing. Barbel fishing as practised from a Thames punt is an easy form of the art, and so far is to be recommended to the novice. But its expense and uncertainty are not in its favour from the point of view of one who has only a limited amount of time and money to spend on his diversion.

My own experiences with barbel have not been fortunate and I have never had a red-letter day. The nearest approach to it, so far as excitement went, was an occasion when six barbel were safely landed on roach-tackle, two of them being hooked in the fin. I once found a dead barbel in the Upper Thames which weighed nearly thirteen pounds, and this would represent about the limit of expectation. I have *seen* fish in the water which probably exceeded this weight, but anything over ten pounds is a valuable trophy. The Trent

barbel are rather smaller as a general rule than the Thames fish, and the biggest of all are probably to be found in the Kennet.

Two other fish for whose capture one or other of the methods described is usually employed deserve a few words. They are carp and tench. Large carp are about the most difficult fish to beguile of all that swim. Attaining a great age, they presumably also attain great experience, and in some waters they seem to be practically invincible. Though they are to be found here and there in most slow-flowing rivers, they are primarily lake or pond fish, and they grow certainly up to 25lb., possibly to more. A ten-pounder is a big one from the angler's point of view. In angling for them one has to take principally into account their extreme subtlety, and their unwillingness to bite if they see the least cause for suspicion. The fisherman cannot be too quiet or too inconspicuous, and, within reason, he can scarcely be too far away from his bait.

There is the further difficulty that they are partial to very weedy spots from which only uncommonly strong gut could drag them when hooked; and they much prefer very fine gut. They are also powerful fish with greater activity than would be supposed from their shape, which is

something like that of a very short, thick chub. Their colouring is bronze.

Baits for carp are many, but I have found nothing to beat bread paste sweetened with honey, and small potatoes boiled till they are soft. Worms, wasp-grubs, gentles, grubs of all kinds, green peas, currants, and most things that ingenuity can suggest are worth trying when one is fishing that water where "nobody has ever caught one"—there are such places. Ground-bait may consist of bread and bran, either by itself or mixed with boiled potato, and any other delicacy of the season. Where the angler desires to draw fish from their haunts in the weeds to clear spaces which are fishable, it is necessary to use ground-bait liberally for several evenings in succession. Then the baited place may be fished in one of the ways described as suitable for bream or roach, either with float or leger-tackle, the bait being kept well on the bottom.

Sometimes it happens that the water is shallow and fairly clear from weeds, and that the carp can be seen swimming about fifteen or twenty yards away. In such a case I use no float and no lead on the line at all, and I ground-bait with pieces of paste rather smaller than that on the hook. With a fine dressed running-line, one can throw out a

good big piece of paste quite far enough to be within sight of the fish. It sinks to the bottom, and remains there. The angler hides himself behind the rushes on which his rod rests, and waits, watching the loose coil of line, about four feet, which has been drawn off the reel and left on the ground. The signal of a bite will be the gradual stealing of that line through the rings. When it has all gone he picks up the rod and tightens decisively. Hooked, a carp is a vigorous opponent and requires a good deal of playing. Unless the water is remarkably weedless I do not myself care to use too fine gut for him, preferring the alternative of fewer bites and fewer breakages to that of many bites and many breakages, though the word "many" is scarcely the one to use with reference to carp-bites! If the fish run big the gut which the novice used on his first trial of angling would be none too strong. The hook also would be about right for paste-fishing, for a good big piece of paste can and should be put on.

For fishing with a little potato a treble-hook or "triangle" is generally employed (No. 9 or 10 in the scale of sizes) and it is inserted in the bait by means of a small baiting-needle, an implement with an open eye to which the loop of the gut is attached. It then passes through the middle of the potato,



drawing the gut after it and finally the triangle until the last is quite buried and invisible. Some men use a triangle for paste also, but I have sometimes thought that the fish, during the tentative experiments with the bait in which they usually indulge, detect the presence of a treble-hook more easily than of a single. These experiments are more noticeable when one is float-fishing; often the float will twitch slightly at intervals for a considerable time before it moves off or goes under.

There is one more method of carp-fishing which is well worth trying in hot weather when the fish are basking near the surface. It resembles rudd-fishing in essence, except that the bait, a biggish ragged piece of crusty dry bread, must be on the surface. For this fishing a slight breeze is necessary, the line must be very light and well greased, and the gut cast should be buoyed with two or three tiny fragments of cork at intervals of some two feet. Casting is impossible and the bait and line have to drift out with the wind, a few fragments of dry bread being sent out at the same time to attract the fish and put them on the feed. It is not an easy method, but with a favouring zephyr it is very attractive. I have heard of dry toast being used as a bait, and I imagine it might

be better than bread, but I have not yet had an opportunity of trying it. It would be tough enough to throw with a dry-fly rod, which would be a decided recommendation.

Of tench it is not necessary to say very much. They resemble carp in their habitat, the two fish being usually found in the same waters, and to some extent in their mode of biting and unwillingness to be caught, except that they are purely bottom feeders, and never take on the surface. In shape they are not unlike a short fat trout, but their colouring is olive with a dusky gold tint, their coat-armour is composed of very small scales, and their eyes are a glowing red. Their feeding is extremely erratic, and the angler may fish for days without getting a bite, or he may catch them almost as fast as he can bait his hook. The last event is a rare one. Worms are best both for ground-bait and the hook, either lobworms, marshworms or brandlings, and the methods adopted for bream will suffice in using them. It is well to conceal the hook in the worm as much as possible. Sometimes tench will take roach baits. Unlike carp, which practically feed only in the hot months, tench occasionally bite well in the early spring if the weather is mild. A five-pounder may be considered a trophy, and a four-pounder a big one.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE WET-FLY EQUIPMENT.

The call of spring—Fly-rods and their cost—A suitable rod—“Medium action”—Reel and line—Backing—Casts, fly-book, and damper—Wading stockings—Flies—A first list—“Points”—Number of flies required—Uses of a small creel—Staining a creel—How to make up a collar—Knots—Combination of flies.

THE angler need not be very old in the sport to experience the call of spring. One day in mid-April, or possibly even earlier in the year, he will suddenly awaken to the fact that his city abode is become intolerable, that rocks, heather, and rippling streams are necessary to his well-being. In other words, he will take thought for a holiday. When he feels like this it is an excellent opportunity for him to begin fly-fishing; a fortnight of continuous practice, with all the zest born of freedom and novelty, will teach him more than would a whole summer of odd days picked at random, and spent in feverish consciousness of the value of each hour. With a fortnight before one it is possible to be leisurely in spirit, and so better able

to absorb impressions. It is understood, then, that the novice has a fortnight which he proposes to spend in fly-fishing for trout. Fly-fishing for trout, as he probably knows, is of several kinds, but the impulse which has made him yearn for rocks and heather has practically decided which kind he shall first essay, fishing with the wet fly.

It has also to some extent indicated whither he must go, to one of the districts where streams run down clear and swift from the hills, either in the north or west. It matters little which he chooses. *Ceteris paribus* mountain streams are very much alike, and their trout much of a muchness, if the term is applicable to things so small. Where the fish run three to the pound the fishing is good, and in most waters five, or even six to the pound are considered a fair average. But neither sport nor pleasure is wholly to be estimated in terms of avoirdupois in this fishing, so the novice need not be discouraged by the prospect of catching only little fish.

Having decided to spend his fortnight in, let us say, Devonshire, the novice bethinks him of tackle. Of what he already possesses only two articles are likely to be of much use to him in his venture, the landing-net and the creel. Therefore, he has a good many things to procure. First there is the rod, a matter in which an immense variety

of choice is possible. Fly-rods are made of several materials, four of which, personally, I should place in the following order of merit: split-cane, greenheart, whole cane, and blue mahoe. The price of a trout rod varies from about five guineas for a first-rate split-cane to about 7s. 6d. for a cheap, but sometimes serviceable, rod of greenheart or whole cane, or for a primitive split-cane of American manufacture. An expensive rod is the best in the long run, and five guineas is soundly invested in one of the finest products of a good maker. A greenheart rod of equally high standard in its own class costs about £2 or a little more; blue mahoe, a light but rather brittle wood according to my experience, is about as expensive as greenheart; whole cane is cheaper, and is also brittle. Split-cane I have found to be far more dependable than anything else, though greenheart is delightful to fish with, and with reasonable care lasts for years. I have said that the most expensive rod is best in the long run, but I by no means assert that a cheap rod may not be quite good enough. Some English makers are able to turn out split-cane fly-rods for two guineas or even less, and I can testify to the fact that many of these rods are excellent. Two of my favourites cost two guineas and (I think) 35s. respectively. Both have seen plenty of hard work, and

will see more. Similarly, a guinea will purchase a greenheart of serviceable quality. Where the more expensive rods score is partly in the careful selection of the material of which they are made, and partly in the care with which they are finished; the ferrules are put on properly, and do not get loose, the varnish is good and well set, and the whippings, rings, &c., are of the best. All these things help to give a rod a longer lease of life.

The length of rod which I should advise a novice to get is 10ft. or 10ft. 6in., in three joints, and, whatever its material, it should not weigh more than an ounce to the foot. Personally, I prefer one which is much lighter, *e.g.*, 6oz. to 10ft. But so light a rod is not suitable for all kinds of fishing, and I am not sure that the novice would not do well to begin with one that weighs 8oz. or 9oz. Properly balanced, such a rod is not tiring when one is used to it, and it will also be adaptable to dry-fly fishing and chub fishing, branches of the art which the novice will explore later. What is called its "action" is a matter of less importance to the beginner than to the old angler. The latter wants what he has been accustomed to; the former has no preconceived ideas, and can accustom himself to any action in reason. Personally, I prefer a rather supple rod both for wet and dry fly fishing,

though for the last most men prefer a rod which is very stiff. I can use most of my rods both for one and the other, which argues a certain advantage in the supple action ; a very stiff rod is not well suited to wet-fly fishing. But it is a matter of taste, and the novice should get some angling friend to help him in making a choice, or he might tell the tackle-maker that he wants a rod to be generally useful, and not consecrated solely to either wet or dry fly, a rod of "medium action." When trying it in the shop he should make sure that the action is continued right down to the butt, that is to say, that when the rod is swung up and down the spring should not cease with the second joint ; the butt should not bend much, but it should bend perceptibly. A rod of good action ought to feel like a live thing, working right down to the hand, but it should not be top-heavy and weak in the lower joints.

As with a bottom-fishing rod so with a fly-rod a suitable reel should be attached to the butt in trying the action. A good reel is rather expensive, but cheap reels can, of course, be obtained. The pattern I prefer is a reel made partly of aluminium, 3in. in diameter, and about 1in. in width of barrel ; it weighs about 6½oz., carries about sixty yards of line, and costs about 16s. Many fly-fishers use a

smaller and lighter reel, but I prefer this one because it balances a rod better and holds enough line for such an emergency as hooking a salmon or very large trout, a thing which may happen from time to time. I do not think one should ever have less than fifty yards of line on a trout reel, and in choosing one the novice would do well to bear this in mind. These fifty yards are made up of thirty yards of dressed, double-tapered, silk casting-line, and twenty yards of undressed water-cord, which need not be thick. If the novice asks the shopman for "backing" he will get the right thing. The two lengths of line are joined together by a splice; this and putting the line on the reel had better be done at the shop.

The dressed line should be chosen with some care. It should have the same lissom, smooth qualities that were desired in the bottom-fishing line, and should not be at all sticky. There is much difficulty in stating what thickness it should have, and by far the best system of distinguishing between lines is to take a standard of weight, as was suggested by A. C. K. in the *Field* of Feb. 24th, 1906. The idea has not, however, been taken up universally yet, so the novice had better ask for a line tapering from F to H or I, or, if his rod is both light and supple, from G to I. For dry-fly



fishing a heavier line is often necessary, but for wet-fly work a light line is essential, as will be seen.

The other requirements are 3-yard gut casts, flies, fly-book, a damping pouch or box, and probably waders. The casts should be slightly tapered, and should be of two strengths, say, from medium to finest undrawn, and from fine to 3x drawn. The stouter casts will serve for learning the game, and for coloured water; for serious fishing in clear water the finer ones will be necessary. The novice might purchase four of the first and eight of the last. A 6in. pigskin fly-book, with compartments for casts, pockets for flies, and flannel leaves, will cost about 5s., and flies tied on gut from 1s. to 2s. 6d. the dozen; prices of flies vary at different establishments, but taking them all round, a stock of flies ought to be procurable at an average rate of not more than 2s. per dozen. For damping the gut nothing is better than a soft rubber tobacco pouch with a pad of flannel or spongio-piline inside it. But round shallow tin boxes are sold for the purpose, and have only a slightly greater bulk and weight against them. Wading-stockings, brogues, and thick woollen socks will cost, roughly, about £2. This is an expense which is not essential; a man should not wade if he suffers much from

rheumatism, but waders, albeit uncomfortable, are useful possessions, even if one does not wade in the usual sense of the term. They are invaluable for crossing a stream and for traversing wet places, such as water-meadows, and they enable one to kneel on damp grass with impunity. Therefore, I advise the novice to get a pair unless he has special reasons against it. Wading stockings and brogues can be procured all in one piece, but personally I prefer them separate, as I think they dry\* better and last longer.

There is no subject connected with angling which invites excursions into the realm of theory so much as the question of flies. Some men have gone so far as to assert that he is not a complete

\* Wading stockings after fishing should be turned inside out and hung up to dry in a back kitchen, or some place which is warm without being hot. When the inside is dry they can be reversed and dried on the outside. After being put away for some time they sometimes get hard and uncomfortable. They can be softened by being hung for an hour or two in the vicinity of the kitchen fire, close enough for them to get warm slowly, but not so close that they get hot. Brogues which have got hard and stiff, and painful to the feet, should be soaked in water before being put on. The socks, which are worn over the wading stockings to protect them from rubbing, should be looked to now and again, as they develop holes in the heels on slight provocation, after which they protect the wader no longer.

angler who has never taken a trout with a fly tied by himself in exact imitation of some insect on the water at the time. This is rather an extreme view of it, but the fact remains that it does pay to fish with something as nearly approaching the real thing as one can get, and the old hand gives a great deal of attention to the fly on the water, and has his fly-book stuffed with a host of varied patterns. After saying this, it may sound contradictory if I advise the novice only to get a few, but I am sure the counsel is sound. In fishing one must progress gradually, and it is far better at first to have a few flies, and to understand their value, than to be perplexed by a great number of which one does not even know the names. Therefore let the novice provide himself with the following patterns: March brown, hare's ear, Greenwell's glory, blue upright, coch-y-bondhu, red upright, Wickham's fancy, and coachman. He should also get a little black fly, which so far as I know has no particular name; if he asks for a "sparsely hackled black spider" he will get the right thing. All these flies should be tied on gut, and they should vary in size. The March browns, for instance, should be of three sizes, Nos. 3, 1, and 0, as the modern standard is. The Greenwell's glories and coachmen should also be in three sizes, Nos. 1, 0, and 00,

while all the others should be in two, o and oo, the black spider being oo and ooo. The biggest March browns, Greenwell's glories and coachmen, should be tied on finest undrawn gut ; all the rest should be on gut at least as fine as the point of the fine casts, that is 3x. If the novice is naturally light-handed he may get the smaller sizes tied on finer gut still, 4x or 5x. In that case he had better also get some spare strands of gut of corresponding size and about 15in. long. These are known as "points," and are to be attached to the end of the cast to make it finer. Fifty points will cost about 2s. 6d.

It is rather difficult to answer the natural question as to how many flies of each pattern ought to be procured. The personal equation comes in here. An impetuous angler needs more than a placid one. Let the novice imagine himself standing gazing up into a tree in which his cast and three flies are safely entangled well out of reach, and let him put to himself the inquiry which he will do, climb or pull. If he is the kind of man who will climb and take great trouble to secure his property, his original stock need not be so large as if his instinct bade him pull. Personally, for a fortnight's fishing I should not feel safe if I had less than two and a half dozen of the March browns,

hare's ears, and Greenwells, and one and a half dozen of each of the rest. But I confess sadly that in the case mentioned I should pull, and in other similar cases I always act unwisely. Also in wet-fly fishing one loses flies through the act of Providence, so to speak, and without just cause. They crack off, wear out, and even blow away, and it is most annoying to run short of the particular pattern which seems to meet the fancy of the fish. Therefore I would advise the novice to lay in a good quantity. Even if he does not use them all up during his holiday they will last all right till the next, providing that the fly-book does not get damp, and that moth is not allowed to come at it. A few fragments of naphthaline kept inside it will keep moth away.

While the novice is still in an extravagant mood, and has his purse open, I will broach the question of one more purchase, quite unnecessary really, but worth considering. That is another and smaller creel. The creel he already possesses will, of course, do for his new fishing, but he will find that it has its disadvantages. For the small trout of the west country it is much too big. Half a dozen roin. fish will be lost in it, will get shaken about, and at the end of the day will be disfigured almost beyond recognition. Even a big catch of trout (as

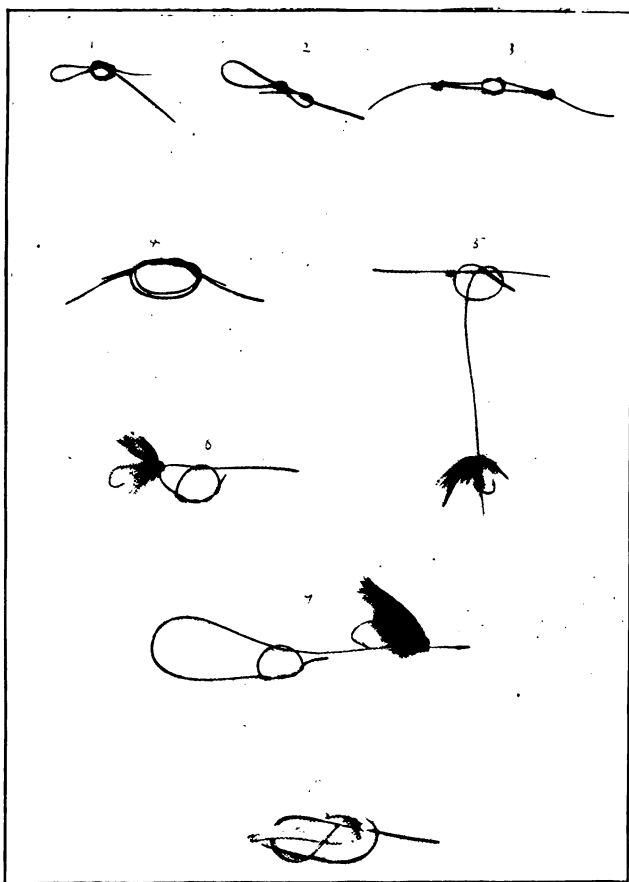
it is reckoned in the west) would scarcely fill a third of it, for its containing power is about 24lb. In a small creel, however, the fish would make a brave show, and they would not get nearly so much shaken and bruised. On the score of the fitness of things, therefore, I would advocate the addition of a 15in. creel to the equipment. The shoulder strap belonging to the big one will do for it, and the cost need not be more than some 4s. A new French white creel is rather a glaring object from the point of view of the fish, and I have once or twice got over this difficulty by applying a coat or two of olive-green varnish stain to the outside; it takes away the obnoxious appearance of newness, and seems to last all right.

Having acquired his tackle, the novice must now learn to manage it. First, he should know how to make up a "collar," as it is called, of cast and flies.

Most people fish with three flies at once, though some use less and some even more. I generally use three myself, except in very small and thickly bushed streams. It must be remembered that gut should always be soaked for at least twenty minutes before it is made up into lines, otherwise it is liable to crack and break. Two knots are essential in making up collars. The first (shown

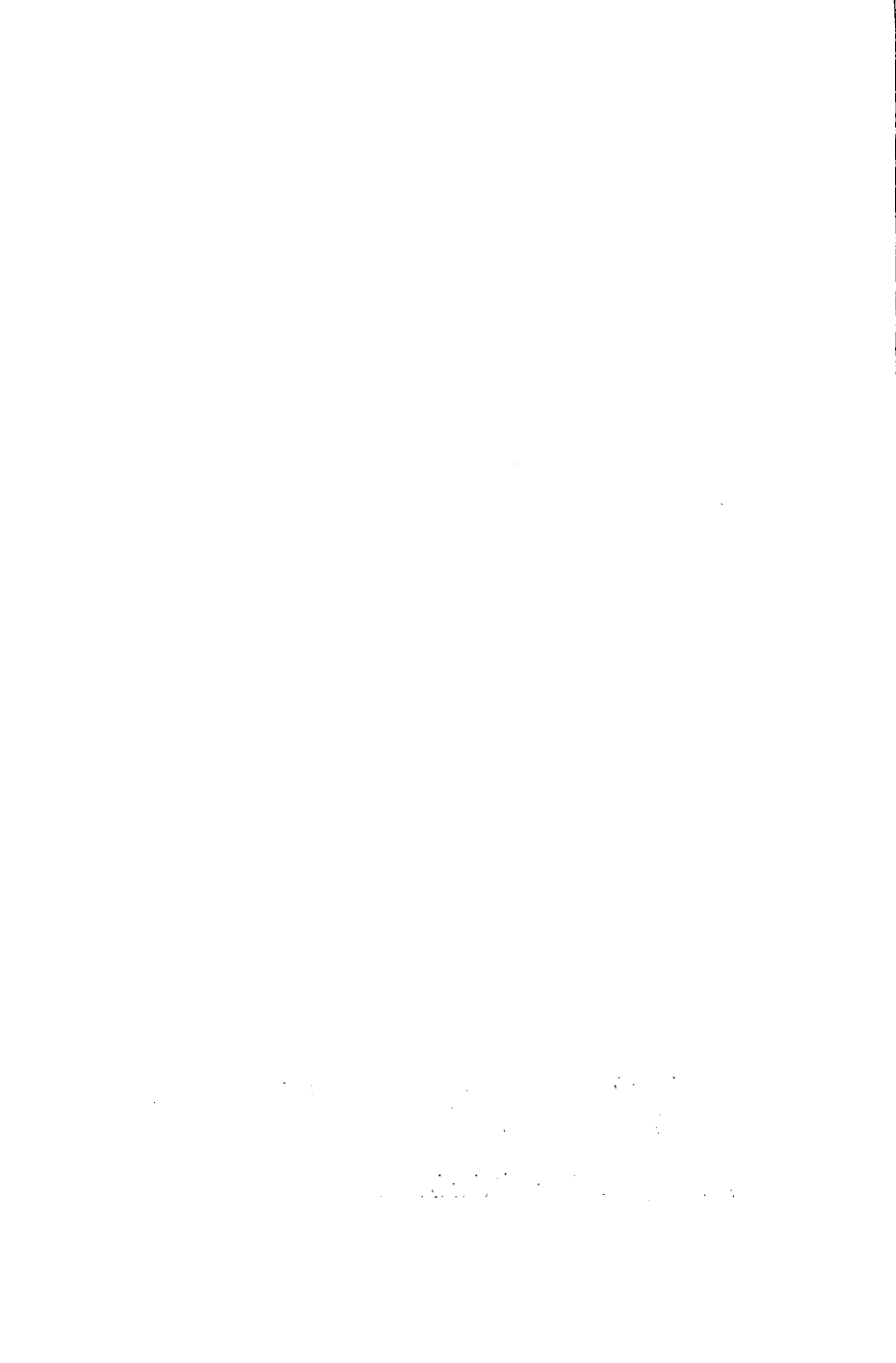
in fig. 4, plate I.) is used for joining the end fly to the cast, and equally for joining a point to the cast, or for repairing a cast which has broken. There are other knots which serve the same purpose, but none are so simple and easily tied as this, and none are more effective.

When the two lengths of gut are in the position shown, the knot is pulled tight, and the short ends are cut off with scissors close to the knot. I have never known one of these knots "give" if it has been pulled properly tight. The knot in fig. 5 is used for attaching the other flies to the cast—"droppers" they are called. The first dropper is put on about 2ft. or  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. from the end fly, and the second dropper a similar distance higher up. The knot shown should be tied just above a knot of the cast, so that it cannot slip down when a fish is hooked. It is pulled tight and the loose end is cut off just as in the other case. The length of gut between the cast and the fly (the "dropper link") ought not, I think, to be more than 3in. I used to have 5in. and even more, but I found that the fly link got entangled with the cast, and even tied itself into knots which I had not superintended. Therefore I shortened it by degrees until I now have about  $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. for the first dropper and 3in. for the second. This saves many tangles and much



1. Tying a loop. 2. Finishing a loop off. 3. Joining loops. 4. Joining gut for casts, points, &c. 5. Dropper knot. 6. Knot for dry flies; run the noose over neck of eye and pull knot tight. 7. Turtle knot; tighten knot, pass fly through noose, and tighten running noose round neck of eye. 8. Figure eight knot, for salmon flies; also useful for joining reel-line to gut cast.





vexation, and it also makes the flies "stand out" better from the cast.

As in joining gut so in attaching droppers there are other methods besides the one given, but the only other which I ever use is a little loop at the end of the dropper link just big enough for the fly to pass through and so to be looped round the cast. This is a safe attachment, and sometimes a dropper so put on can be taken off again without loss of gut; but the result is rather clumsy in appearance, and often the removal of the fly is more trouble than it is worth. The loop can also be used for attaching the end or "tail-fly" to the cast (plate I., fig. 3). Indeed, casts are generally sold with a loop at each end. The only objection I have to this is the appearance of it; trout are so sharp-sighted that every unnecessary knot in the tackle tells against the angler. Tying the loop, if it is used, scarcely needs any explanation (fig. 1); but when the loop has been tied it is made safer by passing the loose end round the main strand, through its own coil, and then drawing it up to the knot (fig. 2). It will then be pointing up instead of down, and after being pulled thoroughly tight it can be cut off close.

The novice while he is about it may usefully make up half a dozen collars with different

combinations of his flies. Two had better be of the stouter class, with a big March brown at the end and a big Greenwell as dropper. These will be for the first effort, and a second dropper will not be advisable. For the others the following combinations will do: (1) March brown (small), hare's ear, Greenwell; (2) blue upright, red upright, hare's ear; (3) Wickham, coachman, March brown; (4) Greenwell, coch-y-bondhu, blue upright. Perhaps, also, a fine cast might be made up with three black spiders on it, for there are days when trout feed on little black flies, and will look at nothing else.



## CHAPTER VII.

### USING THE WET FLY.

In the west country—A licence—Casting the flies—Need for practice—Making the rod work—Fishing up stream—Arise—Hooked and netted—Unhooking trout—Nettles or paper for the creel—A samlet—How to distinguish it from a trout—"Hung up"—Watching the line—Dead water—Haunts of trout—Down-stream fishing, when necessary—How to do it—Short rises—Advantage of up-stream method.

THE young angler is by now, I assume, safely installed in some modest hostelry in the fair west country, vastly pleased with the air, the scenery, the cream, and the soft broad speech that he hears around him. Also he is prepared to begin his campaign against the trout which inhabit the bright stream flowing but a few yards from the inn door. He has his waders on, his tackle all ready, the landing-net being screwed into the long handle, and the necessary conservators' licence has been purchased from the little shop which combines the duties of post-office and grocery. The procuring of this licence is an important matter, for without it

the angler will be liable to pains and penalties even when fishing in private waters. In a conservancy district, as a rule, everyone who fishes for salmon or trout must take out a licence ; thereby the conservators gain the income which they expend in preserving the rivers under their charge. They are also on the whole not too ready to listen to pleas of ignorance when a man has been discovered fishing without possessing a licence.

Now the novice repairs to the river to a spot where, some twelve yards wide, it ripples over a long shallow into a long still pool. Bushes grow all along the further bank, and under them the water is about 3ft. deep. On this side the meadow slopes gently down to a strip of shingle whose edge is kissed by the stream, here only an inch or two in depth. From this side the bed of the river shelves gradually until it is deepest under the other bank. It is there that most of the trout will be lying, and thither the novice must endeavour to send his flies, beginning at the bottom of the shallow and working his way up stream. But first he must practise casting for a while to get the "hang" of it before he begins to fish in earnest. Pulling off four yards of line from the reel in addition to the three yards of gut, he tries to propel his flies straight out onto the water in front of him, using the rod as the

propelling agent. There are, I think, two main rules to be observed in casting a fly. The first is to keep the rod-point well up, and the second is to make the rod do some work. Most novices, according to my observations, are too gentle with their rods, and seem afraid to make them bend. This may be because they have been told that the flies must drop lightly on the water and because they fear lest any force may frustrate this end. Therefore they try by holding the rod high above their head with a more or less stiff arm to cause the line to float out, as it were. This method is just possible if the wind is at one's back, but with the wind against one it is hopeless.

As a matter of fact, one has to use some force in fly fishing—not much, but enough to make the rod bend to the weight of the line. The first action when enough line is out beyond the tip of the rod is to throw it into the air behind one by a sharp, but steady sweep of the rod (made from the elbow rather than from the shoulder), which is checked when it has just passed the perpendicular and is at a slight slant behind the head. The effect of this sweep is to extend the line straight out in the air. Then comes a forward sweep, the rod bends to the weight behind it, and the line flies straight forward. The principle of the thing is very like casting a

clay pellet from a willow wand, a device with which most men made acquaintance in their youth. As the lissome qualities of the wand were made to respond to the weight of the pellet, so the suppleness of the rod responds to the weight of the line, and in each case the result is to throw the resisting object forward. Nor need the novice be afraid of his flies alighting too heavily if he makes his rod work. He can ensure their falling lightly by not dropping the rod-point below the level of his hand at the end of the forward sweep, and in any case it is better to send your flies rather violently to the right spot than to let them drop like thistle-down in the wrong one.

The object of keeping the rod-point high in the backward sweep is twofold—to prevent the flies touching the grass behind and to get the full advantage of the weight of the line, which tells most when it is extended in the air. One more very important thing must be noted, the necessity of beginning the forward sweep at the psychological moment when the line is fully extended, and of making sure that the sweep does not become a jerk. Timing the cast is a matter of practice. At first the novice is bound to make the sweep too soon, in which case he loses the advantage of the full weight of line and only achieves a muddled

cast or a tangle, or too late, in which case he finds that his flies have gone to ground by a horrid jar through his rod ; or his sweep may become a jerk, and then he will hear a crack in the air behind him, and will in all probability find that one of his flies has been cracked off. But when once he has learnt to time his cast properly and to make rod and line respond to each other, he will realise what old anglers mean when they talk about "feeling the fly" at the end of the line. With angler, rod, and line working in harmony it really is almost possible to know exactly what one's fly is doing from the feeling of the cast.

After, say, half an hour of practice the novice may feel emboldened to try and catch a fish. First let him wade into the stream till he is up to his knees and about halfway across, using the handle of his net as a wading-staff in case of holes and for support. Then let him cast his flies up and across stream. The tail-fly should fall close under the far bank and the dropper somewhat nearer ; two dimples will inform him where the flies are, and he must note them carefully. Once in, the flies must be allowed to float down with the stream without either assistance or check. The angler will not be able to see them, but must guess their position by estimating the pace of the stream. Also he must



keep in touch with them by raising his rod-point and lifting the reel-line out of the water. The nearer the flies come the higher is the rod-point and the less is the line left in the water.

When the flies are nearly down as far as the angler's position he lifts them from the water and makes another cast about a yard further out from the bank. There, almost as the flies fell, there was a visible swirl on the surface and a yellow gleam below it. The novice noted this, but did not take advantage of it. What he ought to have done was to throw his rod-point up at once, so tightening the line and driving the hook into the fish's mouth. The response of the hand to the eye in up-stream fishing must be immediate, because a trout in a mountain stream only holds the fly in its mouth for a moment, rejecting it as soon as it realises that it is not the real thing. Also a trout once risen and missed seldom comes again to the same fly, or until some time has elapsed.

In the immediateness of the "strike" as it is called, there lies a certain danger. The hand in its efforts to be swift is also apt to be violent, and the result may be a breakage which leaves the fly in the fish's mouth. Some men are naturally light-handed, and do not break in this way; for the heavy-handed it is good counsel to strike from the reel—*i.e.*, to

leave the line free between the reel and the first ring and not to hold it under the forefinger of the hand grasping the rod, as one naturally does. If the check on the reel is moderately stiff it offers quite enough resistance to drive the hook home. Sometimes I strike from the reel, sometimes from the hand. My practice varies with mood; on some days I find myself more heavy-handed than on others. Now the novice has another rise, his rod-point has gone up, and he is into his first trout, a vastly more active opponent than any he has encountered hitherto. Instinctively the line was released as the fish was felt, and the reel screams as the fish tears half-a-dozen yards of line off it, jumping clear out of the water at the end of its run. The moment the fish stops the angler on his part puts on strain, yielding a little to each subsequent effort, but never letting the line go slack or giving the trout more law than is necessary. As the fight goes on the strain is increased, until at last the fish is dragged beaten down stream, and floated quietly into the net, which is lowered into the water to receive it. Though but a quarter-pounder, the captive has fought valiantly and given the angler as much as he could do.

When one is standing knee deep in the river, unhooking a trout is rather a delicate matter, and

one which would be easier if one had three hands. Being blessed with only two, one has to make the best of them. The rod-butt and reel can be disposed of by being stuck into the top of the right wader, or by being rested on the crook of the elbow, while the landing-net shaft can be held by being pressed between the left arm and the side. This leaves both hands reasonably free, the left to hold the fish and the right to take out the hook and administer the *coup de grâce*. So far as is possible, both these things should be done inside the net, or at any rate over it, so that if the fish gives an unexpected kick it will fall back into the net, and not into the water. I know nothing more exasperating than losing a good fish by its slipping literally through one's fingers. If the novice feels any doubt about the operation he would do well to retreat to the shore, always the safer plan, but one which consumes time and disturbs water. I regulate my procedure by the size of the trout and the ease of attaining the shore. A half-pounder is worth the trouble of landing properly. Killing fish has been dealt with before, but the "priest" recommended for coarse fish is rather a burden when wading a trout-stream, and I generally use the ring end of my spring balance instead. Theoretically it should not be good for the spring balance, but in

practice it does not seem to have damaged it even after several years. Three or four smart taps just behind the head are enough to kill a trout.

When killed it can be slipped into the creel through the opening in the top or side. The creel, by the way, should be prepared for the reception of fish by the insertion of a bed of grass, or, better, nettles. The last are best gathered with the help of a stout duster or a glove. Albeit awkward things to handle, they preserve trout better than other herbage, I think, and seem to keep them cooler. The careful man no doubt will make his creel ready before he begins to fish, but I do not. A lively distrust of my luck in fishing matters always suggests to me that it is not safe. Putting nettles into one's creel beforehand is in a manner like counting chickens before they are hatched. It presupposes fish, and that is fatal. One should let one's first trout of the day come as a glad surprise, and so disarm the malignity of the fates. Otherwise, if one be of too great confidence, the first trout may be prevented from coming at all. Were it not for this superstition, I would recommend the novice to line his basket with a newspaper before he goes out. Paper, three or four sheets thick, is really better than anything for the purpose. He could, to be sure, take his paper folded in his

pocket, and not disclose it till he has caught a fish. Fates or no fates, however, the novice has his first trout all right, and has a right to expect others. A yard or two above where he caught it (reached not by lengthening line but by taking three or four short steps up stream) he gets another rise, and finds he has hooked a second fish. This time it is but a little one, some 5in. long, which can be pulled tumbling and splashing down stream and lifted out instead of netted. Its captor should study it with some attention, for, though small, it is important both in law and economics. It is very like a trout, being red-spotted and similarly coloured; but down each side is a row of dark smudges like finger marks, which were not visible on the trout recently caught. This is not a trout at all, but a young salmon ("samlet" or "parr" are its usual names), and it must be returned safely to the river, for it is illegal to keep it. Many anglers find a great difficulty in distinguishing parr from little trout. The dark marks("parr marks") are not a point of difference, for young trout often have them too, and they are only a sign of immaturity. The easiest method of distinguishing the two is to consider their appearance. The parr is bigger headed and smaller bodied in proportion to its length, and altogether looks less mature, somewhat

as an overgrown puppy looks less mature than an adult dog of similar size. But for a novice the safest plan is to return all fish under a certain size; 8in. is not too high a standard for west-country trout, and it practically removes the danger of killing parr, which seldom or never grow to such a size in the river. An 8in. fish should weigh about 3oz. or a little more, and such a trout is nothing to be ashamed of where half-pounders are about the utmost one can expect. In many a stream 8in. fish are hard enough to catch.

Having returned his parr, the angler works steadily on up the shallow, moving a couple of steps at a time and making three or four casts between each move. Presently he drops his flies too far across the river, and the end one catches on a low bush, where it takes hold. A gentle twitch from the rod may dislodge it. If not, the line must be taken in the hand. A succession of light pulls with the hand will often bring the fly away without disaster; but if this method fails one has either to wade across or to break. Wading across is not always so easy as it looks, for clear water is often deceptive in the matter of depth. It is better to be over-cautious about wading than over-rash. The stronger the stream the less deep should one go, as, even if one does not lose one's balance, the water

is very likely to get over the tops of one's stockings and trickle down inside; the result is peculiarly uncomfortable. The fly retrieved, or lost and replaced, the novice gradually finds himself nearing the head of the shallow. Here the water is swifter and rougher, and a rise is very difficult to detect. Perhaps a pluck at the end of the line will warn him that a fish took his fly unperceived. In such water I usually give up looking at the place where I imagine the flies to be and pay attention to the line instead, watching the end of the cast where it is joined to the reel-line. This is the more easy if one shortens line so that very little but the cast is ever in the water. Any stoppage of the line indicates a rise, and one must strike the instant it occurs. There, following this advice, the angler has hooked a fish not more than a rod's length away from himself. In swift, broken water 18in. or 2ft. in depth one often gets rises almost at one's very feet, and a long line is there quite unnecessary, and even disadvantageous.

Above the rapid water comes a long reach of quiet pool, whose surface is quite glassy. This sort of stretch is, I always think, the most difficult of all on a mountain stream. It contains plenty of trout, many of them big ones, but unless a smart breeze ruffles it they are almost uncatchable. Except

at the extreme head and tail there is little or no stream, and if one attempts to wade up one causes a riot of waves, and the trout may be seen scurrying off in all directions. The only method I have found successful on a windless day has been to wade in and then remain quite still for a quarter of an hour or so. The fish after a bit seem to recover from their fright, and a rise or two may be seen within reach. Then possibly a small fly on very fine gut will account for one or two. But the game is a slow one, and the novice will do better to stick to the more promising water, paying special attention to the rapid runs at the head of each pool, and to the lively shallows.

On the shallows trout may lie anywhere, but some spots are more likely than others. If a rock or boulder juts out, for instance, the eddy behind it is sure to hold a fish or two. A deeper run near the bank or under a shelf of rock, an overhanging bush or bough, the mouth of a tributary stream, no matter how small, all these mean fish. In fact, when fishing the shallows of a western stream I always look out for the spots which differ from the main run of the river and endeavour to get my flies to them. Trout like shelter, and they also like an abode where they can lie comfortably a little protected from the strength of the current and yet



be able to pounce upon any edible thing that comes within their sight ; that is to say, they like a position close to but not in an extra swift piece of water, for in such a place will most food be washed down. If the novice bears these things in mind he will very soon acquire what is called an "eye for water." With that and the easily gained facility in handling his weapons, there is no reason why, on water which is not absolutely fished out, he should not in favourable circumstances kill his dozen fish in a day, with possibly a bigger basket as an occasional triumph.

Personally, I always fish up stream in the manner described if it is at all possible, but sometimes it is not possible, especially in big rivers whose current may be too strong for wading, except in a downward direction. (In crossing a river, by the way, it is always safer to wade diagonally to a point well below the starting place ; the chance of losing one's balance is much less when one is going with the stream.) In fishing down stream one casts diagonally across, lets the flies float down as far as the length of line will permit, and then holds the rod still while they sweep round into a straight line with one, keeping them there for a few seconds, as a fish will often rise at the last moment. An impetuous trout will practically hook himself, but

my experience of down-stream fishing, as against the other style, is that one seems to get a good many more "short rises," that is to say, one feels pluck after pluck at the flies without any further result, and also that one hooks not a few fish lightly, only to lose them after a brief run.

The fault may lie in the fisherman rather than in the method, for I know a good many expert anglers who do not seem to find the same difficulties nearly so prominent when they are fishing down stream. Up-stream fishing has one obvious advantage which it is worth while to remember if it comes to making a choice between the two styles, and that is the relative position of fisherman and fish. Approaching his quarry from the rear he has a much better chance of getting his flies over it without causing alarm, and he can do so with a much shorter line than would be required if he were making a frontal attack; when it comes to hooking and playing so active a fish as a trout, that in itself is a great consideration.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### DRY-FLY PRELIMINARIES.

Merits of dry-fly fishing—Dry-fly streams—The “purist”—  
The rod—A new line and reel—To make the line float—  
Oil-bottle, cast-case and fly-box—Tweezers—Flies—A  
list of thirteen—The Wickham—Knot for tying on a dry  
fly—Drawn gut—India-rubber boots.

THE young angler has now arrived, by stages, at what many fishermen consider the highest branch of the sport, the art of deluding fish with the “dry fly.” In a pastime whose every side is fascinating I do not feel constrained to praise any one at the expense of the others, but there is certainly one feature in which dry-fly fishing seems to me to have a decided advantage over most other methods, its fundamental principle of individualisation. In nearly every other kind of fishing one is trying to catch fish of unknown size and quantity, often of merely supposed existence, by methods of whose operation one can see little or nothing. One would need to have arts of wizardry quite unconnected with skill in angling to know what was going on in

the neighbourhood of one's lobworm lying, attached to leger tackle, on the bottom in ten feet of water; whether a shoal of hungry fish was surrounding it, discussing the order of precedence before beginning, or whether, on the other hand, the worm and hook were hopelessly buried in mud or weeds with never a fish within range of them. In such a case one is quite impotent to satisfy one's pardonable curiosity, and many a time have I heard good anglers utter a wish that just for a moment (no longer) they could have the water removed from some deep pool "just to see what fish there *are* there." This feeling of helpless ignorance limits one a good deal, and, though the unknown is always magnificent, human nature at times likes to dally with the known. Therefore a style of fishing in which one knows for certain that there is a fish to be caught has its obvious advantages.

Theoretically one has this knowledge when angling in the southern trout streams which are the headquarters of the dry-fly art. Chief among them are the Test, Itchen, Kennet, Hampshire Avon in its upper reaches, Gloucestershire Coln, and their tributaries. There are also a few in the north and midlands, such as the Driffeld Beck in Yorkshire and Dove in Derbyshire. Most of these rivers differ from the mountain streams, in that

they have their origin wholly or partly in chalk springs, are of more even and constant volume, and are very much richer in weed and insect life. This last fact enables them to grow trout of a greater general size than the mountain stream can; whereas in the west country a quarter of a pound would be a good average for a basket, a basket from a chalk stream ought never to work out at less than three-quarters of a pound per fish. But one reckons one's sport by "the brace" instead of by "the dozen," and the three-quarter pounder of the rich lands will scarcely fight harder than his smaller relative of the moors, so the dry-fly stream cannot claim unchallenged superiority in its powers of giving pleasure to the fisherman:

Pleasure, however, of the rarest kind it can and does give, and it is easy to understand how many men forsake all other fishing for the sake of it, and how it is that the designation "dry-fly purist" has come to have a special and exclusive significance. I do not think that dry-fly fishing is so difficult or arduous as wet-fly fishing and some other kinds, but it is more suited to the contemplative man's ideal than some of them, and has more minute points of interest than any, arising out of the fact touched on before, that one can see so much of one's

quarry, its food and habits. It seems worthy of note that the "purist" as a rule is a man who has served a long apprenticeship at other kinds of fishing before finally giving himself up to the dry fly, which argues that after much experience of fishes and methods of catching them he has come to the conclusion that the greatest amount of tranquil pleasure is to be got out of the use of the dry fly. But it is largely a personal matter. I know several expert dry-fly men who prefer roach fishing, others who are happier with their cast of three flies whipping some northern burn, and yet others who in the midst of the Mayfly season may be heard sighing for autumn and the pike rod. Happiest, I think, are those who have no marked preference, but welcome every opportunity for fishing of any kind whenever and wherever it comes. The novice, at any rate, if he agrees with my view, and falls in with the suggestions made in these pages, will be in a position to decide after due trial of many methods which he finds most attractive.

Before he starts on the dry fly he will have to procure a little more tackle in addition to what he already has. The rod which he has used in wet-fly fishing will do well enough for the dry fly, at any rate to begin with. Later I will not answer for it,

unless its owner be very strong-minded. The conversation of brother anglers, the comparison of gear, and the trial of other rods that go on at fishing inns or the waterside constitute a very powerful incentive to extravagance. The other man's rod always seems to possess such a sweet action, his line is always so smooth and pliant, his flies so well dressed, that one is consumed with a desire to possess their likes without delay. But at first let the novice be content with his own rod. It is capable of catching fish, which is his first object ; æstheticism in tackle can come later. Another line, however, will be necessary. It should be like the one he has in being smooth and pliant in its dressing, but should be somewhat heavier in make, tapering from D to F or G, according to the ordinary scale. This will constitute what is known as a "medium" dry-fly line, and the novice will find it quite heavy enough for his rod and purpose.

Some men who use very stiff, powerful rods have much heavier lines, with which they can throw a long distance against a lot of wind. But my own experience of these massive lines is that delicacy of action is with them very difficult. One cannot, at least I cannot, use very fine gut with a very heavy reel-line. That may be a personal shortcoming,

but all the same I counsel the novice to begin with the medium line.

The reel he already possesses will do for this line, and it will hold about 20 yards of fine backing as well. But if he finds it possible he might advantageously purchase a second reel. One reel to two lines is short allowance, and constant changing is a nuisance. I often carry two reels with me when fishing, so that I can change from one to the other if I want to for different styles of fishing, or if one line becomes sodden after much use. While on the subject of the line I may touch on the question of something to make it float. Deer's fat is the unguent usually recommended. It is sold in little tins, and is rubbed on to the line with a soft cloth or piece of flannel. Some men use vaseline, which is excellent for imparting buoyancy, but which has the dubious reputation of rotting a silk line. Whether this is so I am not sure. I have found many a line rot, but whether it has been due to vaseline, which I used for some time, I should not like to say. Lines will sometimes rot of their own volition, especially if they are not properly dried after use. Nowadays I use Gishurstine, which has been mentioned earlier, and I have not found any of my lines rot since I took to it.



A little dry-fly oil-bottle with a brush through its cork is needed also, this to make the fly float better. The novice can have it filled if he likes with odourless paraffin. Ordinary paraffin does equally well so far as efficiency goes, though it is not pleasant stuff to handle. Further, a little wash-leather pouch with two pockets, to hold casts and gut, is useful, while a fly-box of some kind is a necessity. Fly-boxes are very various, but after trying most of them I have taken to using the simplest, a japanned oblong tin box lined inside with soft felt, into which I stick the flies in rows. They do not blow away as from some boxes, and they are easily seen and put in or taken out. The lining gets worn after a time, and it can then be renewed. A box about 6in. by 4in. is big enough to begin with. Another plan which I adopted at one time was to stick the flies into little round discs of paper and carry them loose in a box, half a dozen flies or so to each disc. The device is by no means a bad one, but I think it ruffles the flies up by shaking them about. If the novice has any of the casts he bought for wet-fly fishing left, they will do for the dry fly; if not, he will want some more, tapered from medium to finest undrawn, and two yards long. He will also want some more points in addition to those he possesses, which are 4X—to wit, finest undrawn and 2X. After

these remains no essential but the flies, and a little pair of fly-tweezers with which to put them into the box and take them out, an implement which is in theory exceedingly desirable and useful. In practice, I find that I use my fingers and lose my tweezers. But this is wrong of me, and I mention it only as a warning, not as an example.

Flies for dry-fly fishing differ from those with which the novice is already acquainted in their build, and also in being tied on hooks with a small eye at the end of the shank instead of being mounted on gut. In one respect, however, they resemble their forerunners; they are almost as the sands of the sea in number. Here, again, I would counsel the novice to begin with only a few out of the many patterns. At least one expert fisherman and writer states that experience has taught him to be content with four only, and there can be no doubt that a man might so, or even more, limit himself and yet do very well. Personally, however, I prefer a somewhat larger variety, and a fly-box which I am using now contains ten patterns. Six of them are medium olive, red, blue, and ginger quills, red spinner, and Wickham; these are all winged flies. There are also four flies without wings, "hackle flies," as they are called—blue upright, red upright (these are really wingless

versions of the blue and red quills), Tup's indispensable, and a plain black fly with soft hackles, exactly like the one which the novice has already tied on gut for wet-fly fishing. Three other flies ought perhaps to be added to this list, the iron blue, the silver sedge, and the coachman, a pretty fly with white wings, and, having these, the novice may consider himself very well equipped. In buying dry flies (which cost about 2s. or 2s. 6d. per dozen) it is important to see that they are correctly tied.

The wings should be short and set well apart, with twice the thickness of feather which is given to wet flies; the hackles (with the exception of the black fly) should be stiff and wiry, and the general effect should be one of perkiness very different from the soft, drooping nature of a wet fly. The latter is not expected to remain on the top of the water, the former is; more, it is even required to balance itself on its hackles and float with its wings evenly spread and well out of the water. Therefore, the stiffness of the hackles is a vital point. Some flies are sold to the unwary as dry flies because they have double wings, and without prejudice to the fact that their hackles are as flabby as strands of silk; but they are nothing but vexation for dry-fly fishing, while they have too much wing to be satisfactory as wet flies. Let the

novice remember that it is the hackle and not the wing which gives a fly power to float, and that while a single-winged fly with stiff hackles will serve as a dry fly very well (though double wings survive the wear of casting better and are more usual), a double-winged fly with soft hackle is useless. When a fly has no wings to be supported stiffness in the hackle is not so important, but even then it is a comfort. The one exception I have made of set purpose.

Size is sometimes an important matter on a chalk stream, but not as a rule, because one varies it very little. If you examine the flies on six different rods in the morning of an ordinary fair fishing day, you will find that five of them are oo. The sixth may be o or ooo. The intermediate size is, indeed, the biggest that the fish will usually take, and the smallest that the angler can use with a reasonable chance of holding a heavy and active trout. There are exceptions, of course, and on waters which are not much fished No. o is often as effective as the smaller fly. Therefore, the novice should have some of each pattern, except the black fly, dressed on o hooks. The rest I am inclined to suggest should be oo. The smaller size still is too bad for the temper, and though I use it myself, and though nearly all other anglers do too, I think we should all be happier if

we did not. I consider the man who lands a trout over one and a half pounds on a 000 fly extremely lucky. The utmost skill and management are of no avail with an absurd little hook that cannot, nine times out of ten, get a real hold in a trout's hard mouth. I make one exception, however, in my advice; some of the black flies ought to be 000.

Also there is an exception to the suggestions made, or rather an addition, in the other direction. That excellent fly, the Wickham, might well be procured in two sizes larger than 0, to wit, 2 and 4. The Wickham is perhaps the most useful all-round fly in the dry-fly man's list, and very often I have found a trout which has refused all my orthodox small patterns come open-mouthed at a gaudy great Wickham on a No. 2 hook. The largest size of all is for use after sunset when the sedge flies are about. The Wickham is a purely fancy fly, bearing no resemblance to anything in nature; but I fancy the trout must take it to be one of the sedges. At any rate, I find it quite as effective in the evening as an artificial sedge. It floats very well, too, which is a decided recommendation when the light grows dim. The coachman is another fancy fly, used for trout principally in the evening. The white wings make it very visible, which is an advantage. I

have known it kill very well in the daytime now and then. It is worthy of a trial when other flies have failed.

Having his flies the novice must learn how to attach them to the gut. The knot most commonly used, which really serves every purpose, is depicted on Plate I., fig. 6. The noose shown is slipped down over the eye of the fly, and the gut is then pulled tight. Many anglers are content to pass the end of gut through once in forming the noose; but doing it twice is no more trouble, and renders the chance of the knot slipping more remote. Casts for dry-fly fishing do not need so much making up as for the wet fly; the two-yard tapered casts already procured serve as a foundation, and one simply attaches to them one, two, or three points of varying strength, according to the conditions. On a rough, windy day one point is quite enough, if indeed a point is necessary at all. It is very much easier to get one's fly out nicely in a wind with a short cast than with a long one. On a calm, bright day, on the other hand, I like my cast to be three yards long or even more, that is to say, I attach three points.

How strong the points should be depends largely on circumstances. Some of the best dry-fly men do not use drawn gut at all, and they advise others

not to do so either. In theory they are quite right; drawn gut is kittle stuff to depend on for subjugating trout that may be two pounds or more in weight, and there is no doubt of the general truth of their contention that so long as a fly is properly presented to a fish he does not worry about the gut to which it is attached, hardly, indeed, sees it. But, for all that, there are waters on which this inadequate gut is essential to success; they are the waters which are most accessible to the angler, and therefore most fished, club waters, hotel waters, and so on. Also they are the waters to which the novice must look for his sport unless he has a friend who owns a length of dry-fly water and will make him free of it. Therefore, the novice must be prepared to fish with gut not only drawn, but drawn four times; it will not always be necessary, but it will sometimes. Before starting out to fish, therefore, let him put a couple of casts and three or four points of each grade into his damper, so that they will be always ready when wanted.

One more convenience is a small tobacco tin containing a small piece of flannel on which has been smeared a teaspoonful of the Gishurstine mentioned before. This is for greasing the line, a thing that may have to be done two or three times a day. The flannel is best carried in a tin, so that

the greasing process may not involuntarily be extended to other property. Further, the little oil-bottle should have a piece of string tied round its neck by which it can be slung to a coat button, or, better, to the landing-net sling. And, finally, the question of boots and the probable state of the river banks should have been considered. If the fishery to be visited is boggy or sloppy on the banks, or if the meadows adjoining it are "under water," that is to say, are being irrigated by the drains from the river (it is often a question of the time of year) the novice would do well to take his waders. If he does not possess them, let him invest in a pair of indiarubber knee boots, which cost something under a sovereign. I prefer them unlined, wearing an extra pair of stockings to absorb any moisture that may accumulate inside them. These boots are not comfortable for walking, but they keep one's feet dry.





## CHAPTER IX.

### A DAY'S FISHING.

A favourable day—An olive dun—The Wickham as a first fly—Oiling a fly—Taking grease off the gut—Getting close to one's fish—Where to place the fly—Hooking a trout—The dangerous word "strike"—To get the fish out of weeds—The size-limit—Frayed gut—Newspaper for fish—The "drag"—How to avoid it—Changing flies—"Smutting" fish—The black spider—Fishing it sunk—"Bulging" fish—Small flies for the evening rise.

THE day which I would choose for the novice's first introduction to a dry-fly stream would, I think, be one towards the end of May with a genial warm sun, light soft airs, and a few fleecy clouds about the sky. On such a day the trout, or some of them at any rate, ought to be rising more or less from morning till night, and the angler will not be at a loss for employment. Early in April, though fish are to be caught, and though many men begin their season then, the game is a poor one for a young fisherman, because it is often

uncommonly slow. Practically speaking dry-fly fishing depends on what is known as a "hatch" of fly, and this in the early spring is apt to be a very brief affair each day, sometimes even not occurring at all. Arrived at the water he is going to fish on the fair May day the young angler will soon have an opportunity of realising what a hatch of fly is. It is about half-past nine in the morning, and though there is plenty of insect life in the air the surface of the river is as yet unbroken by any signs of fish. On a dry-fly stream it takes something more definite than flies in the air to put trout on the feed. Presently, however, as he watches the water flowing clear and full between its low grassy or sedge-lined banks, now gliding smooth as glass, now curling and eddying over some patch of trailing weeds which have grown up to within an inch or two of the surface, now rippling over a ridge of gravel, now sweeping back in a slow eddy in some little bay worn out of the bank with possibly a glint of white chalk at the bottom, the novice will be aware that something like a tiny ship is sailing down in the distance.

As it comes nearer he can see that it is a little fly with upright wings and long thin body, while its general colouring seems to be olive with a hint of yellow in it. This is an olive dun, one example

of several different kinds of water-bred flies which are common on chalk streams. After having spent the major portion of its life in dull obscurity as a larva at the bottom of the river among weeds or gravel, it has swum up to the surface, discarded its skin, acquired wings, and become a fly. Presently, if it survives the many dangers awaiting it, it will shed its present skin and assume its bridal dress, and then it will be known to anglers as a "spinner." The evolution of water flies is a complicated thing, and the young angler need not at first trouble himself about its processes. What he has to do is to watch the water, find out what the flies on it look like, and put on the artificial which seems most like them in colour and size. And even that is not necessary, I think, at first.

Before long the fly is followed by others just like it, and presently twenty yards above where the novice is standing and about two feet out from the bank, a widening ring on the surface of the water shows that a trout has begun to feed. Rod and line are ready, twenty yards of the latter having been rubbed lightly with the greasy flannel. A well-soaked cast, to which two undrawn points have been added, has been attached, and all that remains is to put on a fly. This had better be a Wickham, for two reasons, one that it is easy to

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see, and the other that it will practically always catch fish when they are feeding at all. It will not catch so many in the hands of an expert as would an imitation of the real thing, but in the hands of the inexperienced I believe it will catch more than anything. When it is on the cast the brush is drawn out of the oil-bottle and the hackle and wings are anointed, being then pressed lightly in the corner of a duster or handkerchief so that the superfluous oil may be taken off. After they have been pressed it is well to spread them out carefully again to the proper angle with the tip of the forefinger. This done the fly will float nicely. Yet one more thing is worth attention, and that is the surface of the gut for the 2ft. nearest the fly. This may possibly have got greasy from contact with the reel-line or during the oiling operation, and in that case it will be much more visible to the fish, or at least so I always imagine. I generally pass the last two strands of gut once or twice through the corner of my handkerchief, very lightly, so as not to fray the smooth surface. It is often surprising what a lot of grease accumulates on the cast, leaving two dark lines on the white linen to show its presence. On a bright day the gut often seems to glitter abnormally. Its surface can be dulled to some extent by the application of dock-leaf crushed

between the fingers till it is of almost the consistency of cooked spinach. Rubbed gently on the gut it takes off a good deal of the glitter.

At last the novice is ready for the attack. The fish has risen two or three times more, and he is able to locate its exact position, opposite a broken sedge whose tip leans over into the water. The river at this point and for ten yards below it flows quite steadily, but then a bed of weeds causes a sharp run close to the bank, and here the pace of the stream is greatly accelerated. If, therefore, the angler were to cast up-stream standing fifteen yards from the fish, part of the reel-line would fall on to this quick water. The result would be to quicken the pace of the fly, since line and fly float down stream together, and that would be unnatural. A fly must travel at exactly the same pace as the water, otherwise it "drags," which alarms the trout instead of attracting them. So let the angler approach stooping, and finally drop on one knee about ten yards below his fish. Often one can get even closer to a trout which is rising under one's own bank, and that is an advantage; an excellent rule in dry-fly fishing is to creep as close to your fish as you can without frightening them.

Next, the novice extends his line just as he did when wet-fly fishing, except that, instead of letting

it fall onto the water between each sweep of the rod, he keeps it in the air the whole time. Casting with the heavier line is, he will find, an easier matter than with the light one, as the rod does so much more work on its own account. He must watch his fly during each forward cast to see how far it is from him, and when he judges that it is about eleven yards away he must try to drop it just in front of the fish's nose. The chances are, that at first he will have too little line out and the fly will fall 2ft. or 3ft. behind the fish. That will really be no disadvantage, for it will give him a clearer idea of the distance, and at the next trial the right spot should be reached. The right spot here is, I think, about 6in. in front of the trout, which may be surprised into taking the fly before he has time to meditate on gut and other suspicious things.

Possibly, once or twice, the fly will fall a yard to the side of the fish, in which case he will ignore it; possibly it will fall heavily just over him, and then he will flee in panic; possibly it will catch up in the sedges behind the fisherman (certainly it will if he drops the rod-point too far back behind him); possibly it will double back and fall in a coil of line; possibly it will crack off in the air while the line is being extended: these and several similar misfortunes are a part of dry-fly fishing, and they

can only be avoided by practice. But it is also possible that the fly may fall properly and lightly, in which case the fish may either refuse it or take it. If he refuses it, the angler should let it float down a few feet before recovering it for another cast. Having recovered it, he must dry it by means of some "false" casts, as they are called—that is to say, casts which do not touch the water, but keep the line in the air. I generally make from four to six of these before casting again. If, on the other hand, the fish rises, the angler must tighten line on him gently but firmly. Some men hook their fish in such a case by simply rising from their knee, which, of course, pulls the line taut. Others do it by twitching the rod upwards with a turn of the wrist; personally I *try* to do it by a movement of the forearm.

The word "strike" is commonly used to express the tightening which sends the hook home, but it is a dangerous word, and leads its victims to disaster. For one thing it implies haste, for another violence, and neither is necessary in hooking chalk-stream trout. Haste will pull the fly out of the fish's mouth; violence will leave it therein—permanently so far as the angler is concerned. Therefore I advise the novice to expunge the word from his fly-fishing vocabulary except as an academic con-

cession to the poverty of our language. Having hooked a trout, the angler must try to keep him out of the weeds, which are very thick on the chalk stream. The application of a little judicious force immediately the hook has penetrated will often fetch even a big trout away from a dangerous weed-bed near which he has been rising. That done he can, and often must, be allowed to make a rush or two, but pressure must never be relaxed; the rod must be kept well up, and the angler must do his best to take him down stream and keep below him at the same time. After a minute or two the fight will be over, and the fish can be drawn over the net and then lifted out. If, as sometimes happens, he gets into weeds at once, steady pressure with the rod from below will usually fetch him out; failing that, the line must be taken in the hand and pulled gently, which will almost always have the desired effect. Failing that again, the angler can either wait patiently, keeping his line taut, or give that trout up as a bad job.

Having, as I hope, safely landed his first chalk-stream trout, the young angler has either to measure or weigh him to ascertain whether he be retainable or no. The size-limit varies on various fisheries, 11 in. being about the lowest usually enforced. One or two codes of rules that I know



have the words "11 in. or  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb." but I should say it is comparatively seldom that an 11 in. trout weighs so much as that; 8 oz. to 10 oz. would represent its weight more nearly, even in favourable circumstances. The most usual limit on good waters is perhaps 1 lb., while on some few it is as high as 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb., and on a very few 2 lb. If there is no stated limit where the novice fishes, and if the fishing is good, he would not do amiss to have a voluntary limit of 1 lb. This first fish weighs 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb., and so is fair prey. Remembering the fight it made, and the way in which it got into the weeds, the novice will now do well to look at his gut point to see if it is frayed.

A frayed point is, of course, not so strong as a smooth one, but it is chiefly objectionable, I think, as being more visible to the fish. This may be imagination on my part, but many other anglers agree with me. If the fraying is very bad I cut off the point and put on a new one; if it is slight, I rub the gut down with a little piece of indiarubber snipped from the outer fold of a tobacco pouch. This has a good, though not very lasting, effect. Next the fly is dried by being pressed in the corner of a duster, its wings and hackles are "preened" into order again, and all is ready for the next fish. The first fish, by the way, should have been

wrapped in a sheet of newspaper, and then placed in the basket. I have lately taken to carrying a newspaper with me on purpose ; it preserves the colour of trout wonderfully, and they come out bright and handsome at the end of a day. Fish of a pound or more are worth the trouble.

The next trout to rise is not under the angler's own bank, but nearly on the other side of the stream. Straight across it is not very far to cast, only about fifteen yards, but it is by no means an "easy" fish, as dry-fly parlance hath it. The novice must observe the set of the stream, how under his own bank it is rather fast, how in the middle by reason of the weed-bed above it is very slow, and how on the other side where the fish is rising it is again fast. A fly thrown with just length of line enough to reach the spot would begin to drag across the river at once, because the mid-part of the line would be held back while both ends were being hurried forward. The method of circumventing this is to have out rather more line than is necessary, and to check it just before the end of the cast, so that though the fly alights at the desired spot, some 12in. above the fish, the line falls in what at first sight looks like a rather clumsy succession of curves ; such a sight may well be shocking to the novice if kind friends have been

telling him that it is a great and good thing to cast a straight line. In some sorts of fly-fishing there is undoubtedly virtue in it, but not in this. Let the novice observe how the awkward curves are gradually being straightened out, how the line is, as it were, drawn off the slow water by the action of the quicker currents, but how notwithstanding the fly floats down over the fish unimpeded. At last, when the line is curved to a crescent shape with its two ends down stream, the fly begins to drag ; but by that time it is well below the trout, so it does not matter.

Getting over the drag is by common consent the most difficult part of dry-fly fishing, and it needs a great deal of practice with unwearying observation. Twigs, leaves, floating weeds, all should be carefully watched as the current carries them down, so that differences in the pace of the stream may be noted. Sometimes a drag may be avoided by casting up stream at a more or less acute angle, sometimes by casting somewhat down stream. Some men manage to make their line fall in a big curve up stream, where the centre of the river has a greater pace than the side on which the fish are rising, or down stream when the current sets chiefly under the opposite bank. I do not think a general rule can be laid down beyond the axiom

that the fly must have enough law to float for a foot or two independently of the line.

In all cases where there is a danger of drag I try to drop the fly not more than 1ft. above the fish; where there is no risk 2ft. or even 3ft. are sometimes not too many. Now and then a fish will be found rising in a place so awkward that it is a question of inches rather than of feet; in some little bay, for instance, where there is an eddy flowing not merely more slowly than the stream, but even in the opposite direction. Here practically one's only chance is to drop the fly immediately over his nose, and it is a poor one at that, for the larger chalk-stream trout do not as a rule like to be startled into taking their food, and prefer to inspect it leisurely as it approaches them. The exception which tests this rule is a fish feeding close under the bank; he will occasionally open his mouth, as it were, to receive a falling fly, especially if it shall have been cast on to the grass or sedges and then twitched gently off. Also in a piece of very quick shallow water a trout will sometimes come up with a plunge at a fly as it falls. Such a fish is very alarming, and one is apt to respond too quickly to his rise, and so to leave the fly in his mouth. As a method of getting over the drag difficulty, therefore, casting immediately

over the fish is not unfailing. Some anglers are exceedingly clever at avoiding drag. I have watched a friend of mine catch fish after fish on a broad Itchen shallow, where the stream varies its pace in almost every yard of its width, and where my own efforts had been absolutely futile, in spite of a good hatch of fly.

This second trout, which has caused the excursion on drags, invites discussion of another topic, the number of casts and change of fly. The first cast is of course the most important, but if it fails, a second or third with the same fly may produce a rise. If none of them have effect (and provided that the fly has each time floated over the right spot; one sometimes makes a good many vain casts before it does so), it may be assumed on most waters that the fish will not take that pattern. Then the novice can change it for something else or seek another rising fish. Often one tries half a dozen patterns before finding the right one. This occupies time, and it may pay better to leave the trout and go on to the next. A good deal must depend on the angler's mood, the supposed size of the fish, and other considerations. There is a pleasant feeling of satisfaction about having secured a fish by patience and trouble, but if at last it turns out to be only a half-pounder, it is a question

whether it has been worth it. Sometimes one can kill a trout which is well on the feed by persevering with the first pattern, especially if it be a Wickham. But on well-stocked and little-fished waters this policy is, perhaps, a mistake. It undoubtedly tends to make a fish suspicious if it does not catch him, and ultimately he will then be "put down," and so to some extent educated. On hard-fished waters, on the other hand, where trout are so accustomed to artificial flies that it is almost impossible to put them down and where their education may be regarded as complete, the practice of persevering with the same fly is not a bad one. Sooner or later the feeding fish may make a mistake, and then the angler is the better for it. If no mistake is made, the fish is, at any rate, none the worse.

It may happen that after the young angler has been happily casting away at rising fish all the morning, putting most of them down probably, but haply hooking one here and there, he will take an interval for luncheon. Afterwards he will return to the stream, to find that the morning rise is over; there are no more duns floating down, and apparently there are no more fish feeding. But, stay; surely there was a movement of the water close under his own bank about thirty yards up stream. The novice sets off to investigate, and creeps up to

within a few yards of the spot. The sun is now at a convenient angle for observation, and he can see not only another movement of the water, but also the fish that made it, lying within 2in. of the surface, and every now and then tilting its nose upwards and taking some invisible object from the top of the water. This is what is called a "smutting" trout, a fish which is feeding on some very minute form of insect life, which more often than not the angler cannot detect. In this instance there is a clue, however. A tiny black speck not much bigger than a pin's head floats down over the trout and is at once taken. The fish is well worth trying, though many anglers are doubtful of the good gained by attacking a trout which feeds in this manner. The ordinary fly it probably would not take (except perhaps a Wickham), but with one of the smallest black hackle flies in his box the novice ought to be able at any rate to get a rise.

A finer point would help matters, partly because the trout is not enthusiastic enough to disregard thick tackle, partly because so small a fly falls more lightly and behaves better on gossamer gut. The first cast produces no effect. At the second the trout can be seen to raise its head and inspect the fly. At the third it takes it very quietly. The angler tightens, with no result. Whether the fish

did not really take the fly properly, or whether the silly little hook failed to get hold it is impossible to say; one thing is certain, that the trout has departed in disgust. The angler must now seek another smutting fish and see if better luck awaits him at the next trial. Yes, there, about ten yards higher up, a trout can be seen close to the top of the water like the first, and now and then taking something so quietly that it scarcely dimples the surface at all. The little black artificial fly floats down once, twice, thrice, without effect; but the fish continues to move at something evidently just under the surface.

Now is the time for the novice to try subtlety. He must so contrive matters that his fly swims down to the trout not on but just under the water. He therefore lets it drag in the stream behind him for a little so that it may get sodden, and then presses the water into it with finger and thumb, after which it should sink as soon as it falls. Then he casts it above the fish as before. Now, unless he has exceptionally good sight, he will not be able to see the fly as it comes down, and his attention should be riveted on the trout. Possibly he will see the fish move a little to one side and then return to its place; possibly he will even see it open and close its mouth; in either event he should



tighten, and the chances are at least equal that he will hook his trout, for, according to my experience, fish which are smutting in this way often take the little fly under water with perfect confidence, and get hooked well inside the mouth—always provided that the angler tightens at the right time.

This style of fishing is not, of course, *dry-fly* fishing, but it is a perfectly legitimate way of catching trout on dry-fly streams when they are obviously not taking surface food. It is also extremely fascinating and by no means easy, for the indications of the rise are so slight that they may well be overlooked. It is much more difficult when the trout cannot actually be seen, owing to the light or to its being too far away. Then the clues to a rise are very small indeed ; there may be a slight movement of the water as the trout moves, but oftener the only sign is that the gut near the fly stops for a moment in its downward course. Some men go so far as to oil their cast up to within about a foot of the fly, so that it may be certain to float ; then it is easier to detect a stoppage and the rise that causes it. But I have found on the whole that without oiling the gut floats well enough to serve as an indicator, and that I generally become aware when a fish has taken the fly. Hooking it is another matter, and here the angler has to depend

partly on having his wits about him, but partly on his luck.

Previous practice on wet-fly streams, as described before, is of great assistance in understanding the movement of the line ; but the matter is infinitely more difficult on a chalk stream, where the trout rise so much more quietly and where the current is so much slower. This method of fishing is practised by some of the best anglers I know when fish are not smutting but "bulging," that is to say, taking the larvæ of flies as they swim up to the surface and just before they reach it. Tup's indispensable is a very useful fly for this purpose, but if the novice has his wet-fly book with him he can put on a wet fly, Greenwell's glory for preference. In all particulars the procedure suggested for deluding smutting fish will apply to bulgers also. If the novice finds the style of fishing too difficult or too much trouble, there is always a chance of rising either kind of trout with a dry Wickham. Quite recently, on a cold, windy day, I failed miserably with some bulging fish. Ordinary dry flies they would not look at; Tup's indispensable under water got a rise or two, but I failed to hook the risers; finally I put on a Wickham in disgust and caught a brace and a half in a short time.

If the novice gets a fish during the dull time of afternoon he may be well satisfied, and may have his tea with a quiet mind. After it comes the "evening rise," five times out of six a disappointing thing. The fly appears and the fish rise at it, much as was the case in the morning; but, owing I fancy to something in the light, the angler's chances are not nearly so good. Often his artificial fly, be it never so cunningly presented, only has the effect of putting a rising trout down; often it is simply disregarded. The usual tendency of anglers is to increase the size of their fly as the light grows less, but I am gradually coming round to the view of those who advise the opposite course. For some reason which I cannot explain trout are often more wary in the evening, and the flies which attracted them before noon have only a hostile influence at dusk. Therefore as a rule I now use hackle flies in the evening, either the blue or red upright or Tup's indispensable, and of a size not larger than 00. I have proved the value of this course to my own satisfaction, but it is impossible in such a matter to be dogmatic.

Hackle flies are less bulky than winged flies, and they are more like the dead flies, "spent spinners," or mature duns after breeding, which float down the river in the evening; but many anglers seem to

do well with winged patterns, such as the red or blue quill. Nor can one say, from the look of it, what an evening rise is going to be like. Sometimes when the trout are rising well they will also take well; sometimes they will not take at all. I have an idea that the evening and morning are productive for the angler in inverse ratio. If he has done well in the morning, or has had the opportunity of doing well (the two things are not, alas, synonymous), he may expect to do little in the evening, and *vice versâ*. But this is only an idea, and I have not enough data to advance it very confidently; perhaps some other anglers have studied the point with the help of carefully kept statistics. If it should prove to be so it would seem that providence treats the angler more fairly than in our heated moments we are inclined to believe. Even if it does not, in warm weather the fisherman has just a chance of mending his own fortunes when the evening rise is apparently all over and the big sedges begin to bustle about in the dusk. But sedge fishing is a thing apart, and must be treated separately.



## CHAPTER X.

### SEDGE AND MAYFLY.

Sedges—Food of big trout—A brief period of fishing—The "path of light"—Fishing the sedge—Rarity of a good evening—The Mayfly—Why it appears in June—Fragility of artificial Mayflies—Hackle flies less expensive and more durable—Mayfly fishing not easy—Nerve and striking from the reel—"Nymphing" trout—Fishing the fly wet—How to catch a big fish.

WHEN the fierceness of day has given place to the soft peace of evening, when the sun has gone to his rest and the western sky is alight with his after-glow, then is the time for the young angler to be-think him of the sedge. There be great insects that appear after sunset, and fly heavily about close to the banks, now and again touching the water, and even swimming on its surface, making a trail like that of a little boat. These are, for the novice's purpose, sedges (entomologists divide the family up into many varieties, but that is not necessary here), and I suspect that they form a

considerable part of the fly food consumed by the larger trout. Indeed, I am convinced that in some waters they are the only flies ever taken by the really big fish. I had four or five trout under observation recently in a certain stretch of the Kennet which I was fishing, all very big fish, and I had reluctantly come to the conclusion that they took no surface food at all, until I happened to be on the spot at about 9 o'clock on a warm July evening. Then I was aware of the power of the sedges, for the monsters were taking them greedily, roaming up and down in search of them. One fish in particular I saw plainly as he swam past where I was kneeling, quite close to the bank. He plunged at my fly, but missed it. He must have weighed 7lb. or 8lb., and I made desperate efforts to cover him once more, but as he was wandering from spot to spot, I could not locate him again before it was too dark to see.

This brings me to an important feature of sedge-fishing—its brevity. It lasts but some half-hour, or at most three-quarters. Then the light is all gone, and the angler had better be gone, too, for though doubtless the trout go on taking sedges and moths till midnight, or perhaps later (heavy "plops" in the darkness argue forcibly that they do), night fishing is uncanny work. To my mind the pleasure

of the thing is gone when one can no longer see the rise made by a fish at one's fly. Of this short available time, therefore, one has to make the most, and it is well to be in the right place at its beginning. The novice should select a sedge-fringed piece of bank, where the water flows quietly and fairly deep, and where the river is running as nearly as possible from the north-west; also he should make sure that no large trees shut out the western glow from the water. Given such a stretch, he will find as he stands and looks upstream that he gazes along a path of light in which he can readily detect even a quiet rise. How valuable this is to the honest angler, he will the better realise if presently he turns and looks downstream. There all is cold, murky, and desolate, while to detect a rise would task the vision of a miner. Above there is still enough light for ordinary eyes, and will be for some time; it remains to make the best use of it. There is no need for fine points now; indeed, gossamer gut would be suicidal. A fish hooked with the sedge has to be held hard and played with determination, for the dusk conceals all dangers that would be apparent in daylight, and one can only guess at their existence. Also, as I have hinted, one may hook a monster whose loss would be a grave misfortune.

Armed, therefore, with one of his biggest Wickhams at the end of strong gut, the novice looks out for a rise. This will probably be a very modest affair, a mere dimple resulting in a quiet ring on the surface. But if the fly falls properly into the middle of this ring proof will surely be given that it was caused by no small fish. Another dimple should follow, the raising of the rod should drive the hook home, and the angler should then try to get the trout into the net as quickly as possible. I like to drop my fly immediately over a fish because, if he means having it, the rise is immediate, and I think a little more violent and visible, than if he sucked it in as it floated down. Also, no doubt, fish mostly take the natural fly at the instant when it dips on to the water in laying its eggs. There comes a last period when one can no longer see the fly, but can just see the ring made by it as it falls, and then I do not think it matters whether it be dry or water-logged; the heavier it is the more commotion it makes, which is an advantage.

Some men fish the sedge wet, casting it across or down stream, and working it to imitate the movements of the natural fly swimming across the water. I have caught fish in this manner, and even by dragging the fly dry across stream, but I do not like it so well as the up-stream plan; it is rather



blind work, and as a rule one has to depend on the hand to give notice of a rise. Still, it is as well to have it in reserve, where one cannot get the light for up-stream fishing or in other emergencies. Taking it all in all, a warm, still evening is to be desired for sedge fishing, and on such an evening sport may be looked for from June till September, a considerable length of time. Fortunately, or unfortunately, such evenings are rare nowadays, so the angler is in no danger of having too much of a good thing. But even a cold evening will yield a fish now and then; it is more hopeful, I incline to think, if the weather has been equally cold all day, and if the temperature has not dropped noticeably with the sun. This, however, is scarcely more than an idea.

The next topic is the Mayfly, an insect which also rouses the enthusiasm of the largest trout in the stream, and which is chiefly important for that reason. In habits and appearance it is like the duns, but very much larger and more noticeable, and also more restricted in its season, which lasts roughly from the last week in May to the middle of June. The Mayfly period on any given river is about a fortnight somewhere within these limits. It is a common joke amongst anglers that the fly is called Mayfly because it appears in June.

The little discrepancy is not the fault of the fly or of altered seasons, but of man who, for his own purposes and without regard to the angler, threw the times out of joint in 1752, and altered the calendar.

Mayfly fishing is just like other dry-fly fishing, the only difference being that it is on a larger scale. The fly is bigger, and the gut must be stronger; drawn gut is a mistake with the Mayfly. Only a short time ago an angler lamented to me the loss of a really big fish from the use of it. If one is going for the biggest trout of all one can confidently use quite thick gut. These monsters seldom or never rise to small flies, so they have not the intimacy with the angler's apparatus that their smaller, better-rising brethren acquire. As to the artificial Mayfly, there are many patterns. They are very expensive, very fragile, and most irritating to the temper. I have no great belief in the superiority of one pattern of body over another, but I like Egyptian goose feathers as wings, and a black and white hackle known as "badger" hackle as legs. Winged Mayflies of the best quality cost from 4d. to 6d. each, and in the hands of a rather rough fisherman like myself their life is deplorably brief. Often a good fly has not survived five minutes of casting with me, and in a day's fishing

where trout were plentiful and rising well I should use up a couple of dozen. Mayflies may be restored to some extent when their wings have got wet by being stuck into one's felt hat (a friend of mine has a flannel band round his for this purpose; I generally stick my flies into the hat itself, which is not very good either for hat or flies, but it saves trouble); exposure to wind and sun soon dries them, and they can be used again. But if the wings have got twisted the fly is of no further use.

It is partly the expense of winged flies that has made me take to hackle Mayflies of the kind known as "straddle-bugs." But it is partly that I have found them to all intents and purposes as effective. They can be obtained in various colours, and I recommend the novice (if he be not wealthy) to depend on them for his principal stock. They float very well if their hooks are not too heavy in the wire, and they last practically for ever. Pale green, dirty white, bright and dull yellow, and smoky grey are the colours I generally carry, and all seem about equally effective at various times. I think the bright yellow one does best towards the end of the Mayfly season, when the fish are more or less gluttoned and possibly relish a novelty. A further useful pattern is the spent gnat, a smoke-

coloured thing with wings outstretched instead of upright. This is also a durable fly, and is often more killing than anything else in the evening. Lastly, the big Wickham with which the novice has been sedge-fishing is always worth trying; indeed, I believe one might use it alone through the Mayfly season and give a very good account of oneself. Personally, I only oil the hackles of winged Mayflies; it seems to me that oil makes the light wings heavier, and does not give them buoyancy if they touch the water, which in theory they should not.

There are not many things to be added to what has already been said about dry-fly fishing in general, but there are one or two. It is a mistake to suppose that Mayfly fishing is necessarily easy because the trout are stimulated to hearty feeding by the natural insect. On strictly preserved water a man can no doubt make a sensational basket if he gets there at the right time. On other water which is hard fished he will have somewhat better sport than at ordinary times if he is lucky, but not much. Trout very soon get to know the difference between the real fly and the artificial, and become consequently difficult to deceive. On most waters, however, there is generally one day of great opportunities, probably the third day of the rise.

Then the novice *ought* to do well, but is almost certain to do badly.

It is very largely a question of nerve. Trout which are really enthusiastic come at the fly with a fierce plunge or swirl which is extremely alarming even to an old hand. Often and often have I lost fish after fish on such a day, by meeting violence with violence and leaving a fly in the mouth of each fish as it rose. The temptation to "strike" a trout which comes at you suddenly is almost irresistible and is nearly always fatal. The only remedy, short of self-control, which in this matter is not to be acquired by everybody, is to strike, since strike it must be, from the reel. This mode of procedure I have explained before, and I have only to add that for Mayfly fishing the check on the reel should be a pretty stiff one, as the hook to be driven home is rather large. Of course the fish do not always behave like this; on some days they rise quietly enough and then there is no particular difficulty about hooking them.

On other days they act in a way which may puzzle and annoy the novice not a little. He will see great commotions and swirlings and other indications of big fish, and he will labour away with practically no result and with a gradually increasing feeling that a great wrong is being done to him. It

is the Mayfly season, there are the great trout rising like anything, and yet he can take no good out of it. As a matter of fact he may to some extent console himself, for they are not really rising at all, and he may be sure that he is not the only angler whose temper is being tried. The fish are feeding, it is true, but not on the surface. They are chasing the nymph of the fly while it is under water and before it has become a fly at all. Sometimes the quarry eludes its pursuer. There, see in the middle of that swirl a fly staggering about uncertainly, just escaped from the jaws of death. For the time being it is safe, since the trout are taking no account of food above the surface.

Success with the floating fly in these conditions is apt to be very small, but there is always a chance that at some time in the day the fish may get tired of nymphs and "come onto" the fly itself. If they do not a brace may sometimes be got by fishing a hackle Mayfly wet. It can be used either in the manner already mentioned as suited to bulging trout or down and across stream in the way which is described in Chapter XII.

A "straddle-bug" moving under water in short jerks must look very like a nymph struggling to escape; indeed I take it that is what it was originally intended to resemble. Our forefathers used

always to fish the Mayfly wet and downstream, and by all accounts their success was at any rate equal to ours. But where there is a reasonable chance of catching trout by fishing dry I think it is a pity to fish the Mayfly wet nowadays. It disturbs a good deal of water with, relatively, poor results. Also the days on which one is tempted to do it are usually at the beginning of the rise, when indiscriminate flogging may do a good deal of harm. Trout do not rush at the Mayfly the moment it appears, and evidently regard it with suspicion for a day or two. But they have no scruples about attacking the nymphs, and what the novice sees and resents is really a preliminary to surface feeding. "Hammering" the water while they are nymphing may prevent them from taking flies at all and is almost certain to make them shy when they do begin.

The Mayfly time is pre-eminently the opportunity for getting a really big trout,\* but one has to make

\*The novice may some day want to utilise the opportunity by going to Ireland and fishing one of the big lakes. Here he will find quite a different kind of Mayfly fishing, *i.e.* dapping with the natural insect: for this diversion a long light whole-cane rod of 16 feet or more, a line of floss silk which is so light that it will float out on quite a small breeze, a yard of sound undrawn gut, and a small hook rather stout in the wire, are employed. On the hook is impaled a Mayfly (or

the best use of it. After a good many seasons spent entirely with this end in view I have come to the conclusion that fish of from three pounds upwards do not necessarily take Mayflies every day. The very big ones, I am sure, rise very seldom. And when they do rise it is as a rule only for a short time. The best plan of campaign is, I think, to find out whereabouts a big fish lies, to wait there till he begins to feed, and then to lose no time in covering him. If possible the fly should be about the fourth that floats down over his head after he has once begun to feed. Then one is almost certain to get a rise out of him. Whether one will hook him, or, having hooked, will land him, is another matter in which nerve and luck play an equally prominent part.

two Mayflies) which is then allowed to float out in the breeze and ultimately to settle on the water until a trout sees and takes it. Some men prefer to have three or four inches of gut in the water, others to have nothing in the water but the fly; practically all are agreed that a rising fish should be given an appreciable amount of time before one tightens on him. There is a chance of getting very big trout by dapping. The method need not necessarily be confined to Ireland. I have had very good fun dapping for coarse fish in England with bluebottles and other lures. The daddy-longlegs is a good bait for all fish and in Ireland it affords a second dapping season little inferior to the first.



## CHAPTER XI.

### GRAYLING.

A cousin of the trout—A “poor relation”—Accusations made against it—An opinion on the grayling question—Size of grayling—Flies—Wet-fly fishing—Watching the line—On the chalk stream—Watching the fish—Not easily put down—A strong fighter—Why grayling are lost—Hustling a fish—Bait fishing.

THE trout has a sort of cousin to which the novice has not yet been introduced, unless he has made its acquaintance fortuitously in the course of his trout fishing. This is the grayling, a fish of many merits, which is found in company with its relative in a good many rivers of England and Wales, and in a few of the south of Scotland. It is a handsome fish, in appearance suggesting a cross between a trout and a dace, and its membership of the salmon family is attested by the little supplementary back fin, known as the adipose fin, which serves for a sign of race, but, so far as I know, for no other purpose. As a sporting fish, I consider the grayling little

inferior to the trout; but it is not universally beloved, and many men regard it as a "poor relation," with most of the less amiable qualities of the tribe somewhat pronounced. Pushing it certainly often is, hungry always, and, from observation of its demeanour on trout-owned shallows, I know that it is meek under affront, yet persistent in attendance—*expellas vel furcá, tamen usque recurret.*

It is amusing to see how a trout will drive a grayling away from his vicinity, and how after a little the grayling will sidle up again with an innocent air of not having been there before. The grayling is also a prolific breeder, and it is a common complaint that, introduced to a trout stream, it increases so rapidly that the original inhabitants get crowded out of both home and cupboard. It is further alleged that the grayling eats trout ova, bullies the grown fish, and generally plays the mischief with a fishery. I mention all this because the novice is pretty certain to be asked his opinion on the grayling question before he is very old in angling. In time, of course, he will be able to judge for himself on these matters; meanwhile, my opinion, for what it is worth, is that there is just so much truth in the accusations as encourages the angler. The best way to prevent grayling from

becoming too numerous is to keep the stock of them within reasonable bounds, and with a well-filled basket on one's back one has the feeling that one is assisting in this good work. The feeling is not of so frequent recurrence that it becomes wearisome; oftener one is grieved to realise how little one can do "for the good of the stream."

The grayling spawns about April, recovers condition pretty quickly, and is fair game by July, though it is at its best from October to December. A two-pounder is a big one from most rivers, but three-pounders are not unknown in the chalk streams, especially the Test. In mountain streams, to some of which the fish has been introduced, it seems to grow better than the trout. I have noticed in more than one river that grayling of three-quarters of a pound are about the average on a good day, as against trout of some five ounces. It might be urged that if there were no grayling there the trout would be bigger, but in one case an interval of some years elapsed between two visits to a river. Grayling were introduced during this, and by the time of the second visit they had grown and multiplied, but the trout had not altered either in size or condition. The greatest merits of the grayling, however, are that it is a very game opponent, that it is usually a free riser, and, last but

not least, that it can be caught in the winter when other fly-fishing is at a standstill. It will take both wet and dry flies, and the methods already recommended for the trout will in the main do for the other.

There are, however, points of difference which are worth touching on. Grayling flies, for example, are of rather a special character, and, though the ordinary trout flies will sometimes give a good account of themselves, it is well to have a few patterns specially for grayling. They are usually hackle flies, and, of course, vary a good deal; but I do not think it is necessary to carry a very large selection. My favourites are Brunton's fancy, gold witch, silver witch, sylph, red tag, and green insect. I consider the first best of all, and I have never yet known it fail utterly. The second is very like it in appearance, but has enough variation to be perceptible to the fish; at any rate, I have more than once known them to prefer one to the other. The witches and the sylph are the invention of Mr. H. A. Rolt, and have proved their value as grayling flies nearly everywhere. The red tag and green insect are old standard patterns always worth trying. Of the trout flies which the novice has already, the hackle patterns and the Wickham are perhaps the best. As a rule, grayling flies have to

be very small, 000 hooks being often required for dry-fly work. The gut also should be as fine as one dares to have it, for grayling are in general more gut-shy than trout.

The method of wet-fly fishing with three flies up stream, as for trout, is the right one for grayling in mountain streams, but it is always extremely difficult to see a rise. Now and again a fish will come up with a splash, but it generally proves to be a small one. Often I have found the bigger fish take very quietly under water, without breaking the surface at all : therefore I almost always adopt the plan recommended earlier for trout in quick, broken water, of watching the line and tightening whenever it stops. Nothing can be more enjoyable than fishing in this way where the water runs about 2ft. deep from a shallow into a pool. Often there are several yards of gentle, steady-flowing ripples at such a point, and there grayling are almost sure to congregate. A very short line can be used, and, as the fish are generally in a shoal, one can often catch several without moving a foot. The very swift water is usually not so good for grayling as for trout, and the very slow water is difficult to fish except with a dry fly, and even with it unremunerative. In the smooth, steady glides of moderate depth, also excellent places, one can sometimes see

grayling rising, and then it may be better to fish the dry fly. As a rule, however, I have done more by fishing wet on these streams.

Nor is the wet fly useless on the chalk stream. Used after the fashion advised for smutting trout, it is often very killing, but it is also very difficult. In the slow current the stoppage of the line is hard to detect, and harder to profit by. The ideal spot for the game is one where you can see your fish lying on a patch of gravel. Casting the fly above it, you fix your attention on the grayling. Presently you see him tilt his nose, swim up towards the surface, and then turn to go down again. At that moment you tighten, and with luck have him fast hooked. Grayling do not, like feeding trout, lie poised near the surface, but almost always come up from the bottom to take a fly. Usually they make very little fuss about it, and the sign of their rise is hardly more than a dimple on the surface. Even when one of them takes the dry fly the matter is not very noticeable, and it sometimes looks almost as though the lure had simply vanished of its own accord.

In one or two respects grayling differ from trout. One is that they are not easily put down. You can go on casting over a rising fish a dozen times or more, and catch him at last ; you may even rise him

once or twice, and then catch him. Also several grayling often rise close together, and your fly may stand a chance with half a dozen at once. I have before now spent an hour over a shoal practically without moving, getting an occasional rise from one or the other as a slight encouragement, and at last catching one or two as a reward. Where one can see the fish one notices that one or other of them generally just raises his head as the fly floats down over him. This is practically a promise that a rise will follow sooner or later. The best water for big grayling in a chalk stream is generally deep and rather slow, but there are usually some on the shallows too.

A grayling hooked, especially a big one, is by no manner of means a grayling landed. They are extremely powerful fish, they know all about weeds, and they have a maddening habit of getting off just as one has the net ready to receive them. This is, I think due to the fact that they are often hooked just at the corner of the mouth in a little piece of loose membrane to be found there. This yields to a moderate strain, and the fish is gone. Even when well hooked a grayling is very apt to go to weed, and there fray the fine gut through. The only way that I know of to avoid this is to hustle him from the very start. Taken boldly by surprise, he will

often come to the net without much difficulty, but if he once gets his head he will not only fight to a finish, but even then begin the battle all over again. His play is never so dashing as that of a trout, but it is longer and, on the whole, more formidable. I am much more nervous with a good grayling than with a trout of the same size. Barring accidents, one ought to land the trout; with the grayling accidents cannot be barred.

In some northern waters grayling are much fished for with bait, red worms and gentles being the best lures. I have caught them both with a float and without it, and the novice ought not to find much difficulty in acquiring the knack of "swimming the worm." Fine roach tackle with a tiny round cork float is generally used; the bait should be a few inches off the bottom, and roach-fishing ideas are adapted to the requirements of rapid and broken water, of which some miles are covered in a day, either by wading or from the bank. I rather like a light 12ft. rod (I have even seen a man using a 16ft. salmon-rod, and catching fish with it), but a 10ft. fly-rod will do. The important thing is to offer the worm in the right places and in a natural manner, as though it were borne along by the stream, and the tackle employed is subsidiary to that end.



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BIG FLY.

Cannibal trout—Their food—The size which they reach—  
The "big fly"—A short list—Sizes and cost—The Turtle  
knot—How to fish the fly—To make a line sink—Time  
to fish—"Short-rising" trout—Loch-fishing and loch  
flies—Boat and shore fishing.

THOUGH an amiable dispensation of Providence has brought it about that trout should on occasion take flies on the surface of the water, it must not be supposed that they obtain the whole or even the greater part of their sustenance in this way. In all rivers they depend very largely on bottom food—larvæ, snails, shrimps, crayfish, minnows, loach, and other small fish—and in some without doubt they feed on these things almost entirely. The result is a race of what are called cannibal trout, which scorn the ordinary allurements of both the dry and wet-fly man, and which must be attacked in a somewhat different manner. Such trout are to be found in the Thames, in the lower reaches of most of its

tributaries, and in a good many of the rivers which hold a large stock of coarse fish. They are also caught now and then in trout streams proper, even a mountain stream whose fish barely reach an average size of three ounces occasionally yielding an overgrown monster of two or three pounds. There is a difference, however, between such a trout and a cannibal from a coarse-fish river. The first is usually long, dark, big-headed, and generally dyspeptic looking, whereas the other is shapely, bright, and in perfect condition. The typical Thames trout, for example, cannot be surpassed in looks by any of its brethren, and the fish of the Colne and lower Kennet are equally admirable.

The explanation is simple. The mountain fish has outgrown its food supply, and has to depend chiefly on catching samlets or its younger relations, which are agile enough to make this difficult; the Thames trout, on the other hand, has unlimited food always at hand in the shape of bleak, small dace, gudgeon, minnows, and other little fish which can be easily caught. Somewhat akin to these big river trout are those that inhabit certain lakes and reservoirs and sometimes attain an equally large size. As in rivers, their growth depends on the food supply, and it varies immensely in sheets of

water of much the same size and appearance. In many moorland lochs the trout barely reach a quarter of a pound in weight, while in others, sometimes within a mile or two, two-pounders and three-pounders are not uncommon. The most noteworthy instance of growth in lake trout of recent years has been at Blagdon Lake, the new reservoir which supplies the needs of Bristol. Here the fish run up to four pounds and five pounds, the average size now being rather over three pounds. In the first two years of its existence as a fishing resort the average was a good deal higher, and not a few monsters up to nine pounds were caught, but recently the biggest fish seem to have acquired cunning. Nevertheless, inasmuch as a five-pounder is a prize from any water, the lake affords a wonderful example of what trout may attain to.

It must be confessed that as a race cannibal trout are not very responsive to the fly-fisher's efforts, but still they are to be caught with the fly rod. Mayfly and sedge fishing, about the only dry-fly methods which have a chance, have been discussed. Small flies, both dry and wet, score only a very occasional success with trout over about three pounds, except in one or two highly favoured waters. There remains to the fly-fisherman only what may be termed generically

"the big fly." Strictly speaking, this is not a fly at all, though it resembles a small wet fly in shape and build. If it is meant to imitate anything it is a small fish. Practically any salmon fly does this more or less, and salmon flies are to be numbered by the hundred, so the novice has a wide range of choice. I do not, however, think that more than a few patterns are necessary. Without denying merits to others which are not named, I depend on about half a dozen for river fishing. They are March brown, Silver Grey, Dusty Miller, Silver Doctor, a gold-bodied fly something like a Wickham, but more reddish-brown in general effect, and adorned with a red tail, and another gold-bodied fly with flame-coloured hackle and rather lighter wing. Both these flies are for bright, windy weather. Lastly, I generally carry, but do not now often use, the Alexandra, a famous silver-bodied pattern with green peacock wings and hackle. This fly is extremely deadly on waters where it is new to the fish, but I fancy they soon get to know and suspect it.

As to sizes, I like to have plenty of variety, from about half an inch up to one and a half inches, the first for hot weather and low, clear water, the last for windy days and thick or rough water. Some men use flies even bigger than that,

but I do not think they are really necessary, and for all-round work a fly one inch long is quite big enough. It is hard on an ordinary trout-rod to have to cast anything larger, and harder still when it comes to hooking a fish, for the big hook needs a good deal of driving home. Therefore, if the novice has most of his flies varying from half an inch to one inch, with two or three bigger ones for occasional use, he will be well enough equipped. Salmon flies are expensive and his selection will cost him from 9d. to 1s. 6d. apiece at a good shop. The March browns and Alexandras cost less. It pays in the long run to get really good flies as they last so much longer. Cheap flies have an irritating habit of coming to pieces after a little use. In choosing his flies the novice will be confronted with the question, gut or metal eyes? For trout I do not think it matters, from the point of view of hooking fish, but the metal eye is more durable, and therefore is perhaps to be recommended.

The gut can be attached to it in the manner already prescribed, but a better knot for big flies is the Turtle (Plate I., Fig 7). This is easily tied as follows: Pass the end of the gut through the eye of the hook from the side furthest away from the hook point, run the hook up the cast for 6in. or so,

that it may be out of the way of the next proceeding, which is to make a running noose by doubling the end of the gut back and tying a single knot round the main strand; pull this knot tight, pass the fly back down the cast and through the noose, and then pull the noose itself tight round the neck of the eye. The attachment so formed is very secure. Very fine gut for this kind of fishing is a mistake, because the fly is heavy and liable to get whipped off, a thing which amounts almost to a financial misfortune—quite, when, as has sometimes happened to me in a high wind, half a dozen flies are lost one after the other. Indeed, I think it is better to err on the side of caution, if error there must be. In rough, broken water, such as one finds below a weir, one can safely use quite stout gut. Also I think cannibal trout are not so shy of the tackle as fish which feed more on or near the surface, and the bigger they are the less shy do they become, provided that they are on the feed. It is very little use casting over a monster except at his meal-times.

It has been said that the big fly is meant to represent a small fish; it follows, therefore, that the way to use it, both in rivers and lakes, is to make it behave as such. It is not, therefore, enough to cast it up stream and let it swim down.

with the current, or to cast it into a pool and let it sink. One has to make it move jerkily under water like a minnow suffering from nerves. This is best done by repeated but slight pulls from the rod-top, and most easily, in rivers, when one has cast not up but down stream. For the most part it is down-stream work, and one aims at casting down and across at such an angle that the point of the rod is always in touch with the fly, and is not separated from it by a sagging line. The angle varies according to the pace of the stream, but in general it cannot be a very wide one if the line is to be kept pretty straight. When the line is much bellied it makes the fly drag through the water in an unattractive manner, and hooking a fish, if one should rise, is much more difficult. At first the novice should practise with a shortish line until he feels more or less intimate with his fly's behaviour. Then he may lengthen line as much as he likes and can. A long line in down-stream fishing is often essential, and he will do well to learn to "shoot" a yard or two. This consists in drawing a little extra line off the reel, holding it between the forefinger and thumb of the hand on the rod, and releasing it when the line is nearly extended in the forward cast. The weight of the line in the air pulls the rest through the rings, and several

yards can in this way be added to the cast. One is enough to practise with.

The novice will find the heavier of his two lines the best to fish with, but after using it for dry-fly work he will have a difficulty in making it sink at first, and sink it should to be effective. When I want to convert a dry-fly line to wet-fly purposes in a hurry I generally rub twenty yards of it down with soft wet mud, which has the desired effect. The mud should not be gritty, or the surface of the line may suffer. I have not found the process injurious to dry-fly lines if they are dried afterwards, but it is undoubtedly better to keep two lines, one for each kind of fishing, and the wet-fly one should have as much backing attached to it as can be got on to the reel. It may never be required, but, on the other hand, it may on some occasion be wanted very badly. At Blagdon, for instance, it would be most unwise to fish with less than 60 yards of line on the reel.

The best times and places for this kind of fishing are the times and places at which the big trout feed. Early morning and late evening offer the best chance with the monsters, and gravel shallows just above or below deep holes are their natural dining places, for there the shoals of small fry congregate. A series of big waves on some shallow at dusk



usually denotes a trout at dinner, and a Silver Grey worked temptingly in front of the spot will generally produce a swirl, if nothing more tangible. A big head and shoulders seen for an instant in the foam below a weir are also hopeful signs, and should prelude a rise, possibly a capture. But in this kind of fishing the novice must be prepared for disappointments. The proportion of fish risen and apparently missed is greater than seems just. I say "apparently," because I do not think they are really missed. The fly has, I believe, in such cases been attractive enough to move the trout, but not to take him. When he has really made up his mind to have it the chances are three to one in the angler's favour, failing accidents, for the trout makes no bones about it, and probably gets hooked in the tongue. Now and again the fish gets off after a fight, but not often if the rod is handled discreetly. Anglers sometimes say that a trout has been missed because the "strike" was not quick enough; this I do not believe. A big trout, if he takes at all, takes well and practically hooks himself; if he does not take, no effort on the angler's part will mend matters.

I have said that this is mostly down-stream work, yet casting up stream is by no means to be shunned as useless. It is toilsome, because

the fly must be kept moving a little faster than the current, but it is often well worth while, especially with trout that are much fished for in the ordinary down-stream way. To them a fly moving down over their heads comes as a refreshing novelty, and is sometimes welcome. Finally, though fishing the salmon fly for trout is not perhaps the noblest mode of taking them, it has its difficulties and its fascinations. On the trout stream proper it has no place and no right of it, but, where trout are few, heavy, and hard to beguile among shoals of coarse fish, it is entitled to rank as very pretty art.

Somewhere midway between this kind of fishing and wet-fly fishing on a mountain stream as described in a previous chapter comes loch-fishing of the ordinary kind. It is kin to both styles, for sometimes it requires the use of the usual small wet-flies, sometimes of large and more gaudy patterns, which are not quite salmon flies and not quite trout flies. Such confections as the teal and green, teal and red, butcher, Zulu, grouse and green or claret, etc., form a rather large family by themselves. Most of them are deadly on occasion, but I think the yellow-bodied March brown is as good as any of them in most circumstances. If the novice is going to visit any particular loch, he would do well to take the advice of local gillies. If

no advice is to be had, he will not go far wrong with a stock of the flies named in addition to his ordinary wet flies. The sizes should vary according to weather, big patterns being suited to a windy day, small ones to a calm. No. 6 will usually be found quite big enough, and No. 2 quite small enough. I have most of my loch flies tied on Nos. 3 and 4 eyed hooks; I find that they last better than flies on gut. Two or three flies can be used on the cast at the same time, as in stream fishing, the gut being proportionate to their size, the size of the fish, and the state of weather and water.

Loch-fishing from a boat, for a novice, will depend entirely on the gillie and his geographical knowledge. The angler will be told what flies to put on and where to cast them, and, for the rest, luck will decide the sport. Shore-fishing, which I much prefer, is more interesting, since it makes greater demands on independence, and also gives more exercise. Unless the wind is altogether too violent, I fish the shore towards which it is blowing; by casting diagonally out one can usually cheat the wind, and when there is a good ripple a very long line is not required. Trout often have a convenient habit of feeding close to the shore, sometimes, where there is enough water

for them, within a foot of it, and it is waste of labour to try and fish the middle of the lake, when one can get from two to four feet of water within ten yards of the edge, and can often reach the shelf between the shallows and deeps, the best spot of all in many lakes. Sometimes where the shore is very flat and the water in consequence very shallow it pays to wade out so far as wading stockings will allow and thus to get at the deeper water. If I can get my flies to a spot three or four feet deep, I am satisfied. They can be "worked" in the manner already described, or they can be drawn slowly through the water; occasionally I have found the second method pay better than the first. In either case a rise can usually be both seen and felt, and often there is also to be seen a gleam of yellow or silver, as the trout comes up to the fly. There are few more pleasurable things than this in the pastime of angling.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### COARSE FISH AND THE FLY.

Other uses for the fly-rod besides trout fishing—Chub—  
Stalking them—Their wariness—Big flies—Hot weather  
required—Small dry flies—"Not taking"—Feeling the  
fish—Strong gut—Dace—Lost flies—Their quick rising  
—Dry-fly fishing—Big dace rise more slowly—Roach  
and rudd—Perch sometimes take a fly—So do pike.

THE trout is a noble fish, and his best friends could scarce rate him too highly. But he has the disadvantages incidental to his qualities; he is a thing of price, and not always to be come at by anglers with slender purses. Also, though pretty widespread in his habitation, he is not everywhere to be found; there are many tracts of good angling water which know him not. Still, the young angler need not refrain from learning to use a fly-rod on that account, since it will give him' very pretty sport with other fish, less thought of, it is true, but in my opinion quite as interesting to angle for. First among them is the chub, the loggerhead of Walton's panegyric. This fish the novice knows, for has he

not already caught him with the worm? But he does not, perhaps, know all his habits yet, or how in the dog-days he is to be found basking on the top of the still, deep river pools, among the lily leaves, beneath the willow boughs, or between the streamers of cool green weed. This is a very lovable habit of the chub, and it makes him game worthy of any sportsman's pursuit. He is easily seen, but hardly approached, and what more can one desire?

Chub are, to my thinking, much more difficult to stalk than trout, and there is a real feeling of triumph about having been able to place a fly to a visible monster, despite the many obstacles which had to be overcome, such as trees, rushes, long grass, and, worst of all, the fish's abnormal power of detecting danger and stealthily disappearing. Then there is a supreme excitement in watching the fish whip round as the fly falls, swim resolutely up to it, open his capacious mouth, and suck it in. Also it takes nerve to hold one's hand until the last process is complete and then to tighten slowly and gently. If nerve fails and one tightens too soon, there is an indignant plunge of impressive violence, and the chub is gone, put down probably for the morning; if one strikes too hard the fly is gone with him. But if all is well-managed there

is first a strong, determined rush for the tree roots, the rushes, or some other place of refuge, and then a ding-dong fight, in which the angler ought to prove the victor. The chub does not fight so madly as a trout, but he fights uncommonly well; on light tackle the resistance is, I think, quite as lengthy.

This hot weather stalking is one of the most fascinating ways of taking chub, and it can be done with either the wet or the dry fly, with tiny midges or with huge buzzy things called palmers, and meant to imitate caterpillars. On the whole, I think the wet fly pays best, but not always or everywhere. Some highly-educated chub have to be approached with small flies on fine gut, especially if they have been educated by good fishermen. For such fish the novice's dry flies (especially the coachman and the red spinner) will do well enough. The others can be caught freely with big flies which fall in with a plop. My favourite chub flies are the alder, coachman, black palmer, soldier palmer, and Francis, a silver-bodied fly that looks like a cross between an alder and an Alexandra. I have them all tied with a tail of white wash-leather, about  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. long, and in sizes varying from  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. A fly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. long is big enough, as a rule, but now and then I have found a black palmer  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. long do better:

it may be that the fish take it for a large slug. The essentials in chub stalking are to see the fish without being seen by them, to be able to place the fly somewhere near them (behind them is often as good as in front), to strike slowly, and to hold them out of weeds and other dangers when first hooked.

Another essential, which the angler cannot control, is the weather; it must be hot, with little or no wind. Unless it is hot the fish will not be on the surface, and if it be windy the angler will find it very difficult to see them. Failing the fish themselves he must look out for their rises, or else cast at a venture in likely spots. The rise of a chub is generally a quiet thing, and the superficial commotion is often hardly greater than that caused by a bleak or small dace; but comparison of the two will generally disclose a difference. The chub makes a much deeper ring, and often a wave as he cruises slowly about under water. When chub are really rising well (not a very frequent occurrence) the dry fly brings sport. I have several times had big baskets of chub with tiny trout flies and fine gut, fishing dry. It may have no universal significance, but on nearly every such occasion, I think, the weather conditions have been distinctive—a kind of April day placed in August or September, with alternations of sun and cloud, a light but



noticeable breeze from south or west, and a feeling of freshness in the air. Such a day often comes after thunder and heavy rain, and it seems to make the fish feed in earnest. There is then no hesitation about their proceedings, and they absorb the red spinner or quill greedily. When they are not in earnest their behaviour to a small dry fly is different; they push it with their noses, roll over it, swirl under it, do anything, in fact, which may persuade the angler that they are taking it. He tightens vainly, there is a mighty plunge of real or feigned alarm, and he understands that they are *not* taking it.

For these reasons I prefer, as a rule, to fish a big fly wet, casting it to a likely spot, and drawing it slowly across the water. Especially on windy days a rise will more often be felt than seen, though sometimes a wave will be observed following the fly across the water. This wave indicates an intending chub, and the angler should draw the fly steadily on till the line tightens—till, that is to say, the fish has got the fly into its mouth and is turning with it. The process is a leisurely one, and there is no fear of striking too late, as there might be with a trout. In fact, one of the principal difficulties of chub fishing is to acquire the knack of feeling a fish and hooking it slowly. The gut for chub should be strong if the

water is at all weedy or complicated by snags. The cast recommended for Mayfly fishing is about right. Strong gut serves not only to keep heavy fish out of weeds, but also to pull the fly safely away from bushes, boughs, reeds, and other things onto which it is sure to fall now and then. Chub are not gut-shy in most rivers ; where they are, one must use fine tackle and trust to luck.

The next fish for the novice's attention is the dace, which he also knows by sight. There is no more sport-giving fish in our waters, but as it is small the tackle used for it should be of the finest. It can be caught with both wet and dry fly, principally on the shallows, and the method of fishing is not very different from that employed for trout. Where dace run small (averaging, perhaps, 3oz.), I use a cast of three wet flies—black gnat, coachman, red tag, Brunton's fancy, and Wickham being my favourites. Any small trout fly will catch dace, more or less, but a little wash-leather tail makes it very much more attractive, just as in chub fishing. The usual sizes are 00 and 000, but now and again a bigger fly, a 0 or No. 1, will kill bigger fish.

Dace are not like chub in their method of rising, except when they are very large. They dash at the fly and let go again in a moment, and

the angler has to be very prompt in hooking them. With very fine gut it is safer to strike from the reel. One fishes either across or down stream, drawing the flies slowly through the water, or up stream, letting them come down with the current. I prefer the last method, as I hook more fish by it, and find that often a dace rises as the fly falls and is hooked at once. In dragging the flies one gets many more abortive plucks than fish. With the dry fly one fishes rather over the shoal than over any individual dace, and with small ones one must be no less prompt than with the wet fly. With fish over  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. it is sometimes different. I have known really big dace rise at a dry fly in a very leisurely way, and in such a case one should not hurry the strike. All the flies mentioned as wet flies do equally well for dry-fly work, and any of the other patterns in the novice's trout box should kill dace, for they are not as a rule very particular. The best all-round fly is perhaps the coachman.

The novice may sometimes get very fine sport with roach and rudd. Rudd, as has before been said, feed principally in shallow water, among beds of lilies, rushes, or reeds, and their presence can usually be detected, for they make themselves pretty obvious in hot weather. Often one can see them, like chub, on the surface. Roach also are occa-

sionally to be found at the top in hot weather, and then they will generally take a fly. The methods employed for chub and flies used for dace will answer with both fish. I have now and again caught them on biggish chub flies, and once I caught two large roach on a salmon fly about *rin.* long. On the whole, I have done more good with wet flies than dry, and I have found both rudd and roach take them even more slowly than chub. Roach in particular will often follow a black gnat or coachman for many yards, taking it at the last moment. One of the best flies for rudd is the Francis chub fly, dressed on a No. 1 or 2 hook. The gut should be as fine as possible for both, but the rudd is the stronger fish, and is often caught in places where gossamer tackle means certain disaster. Therefore I do not often fish for it with anything finer than 2x.

Lastly, it is perhaps worth mentioning that perch are now and then to be caught with a gaudy fly. I once had quite a nice little basket of them when fishing below a Thames weir with a small salmon fly in hopes of a trout, and the capture of an odd one when one is fishing in this manner is a common event. In a river it is scarcely worth while to fish with a fly definitely for perch, but there are shallow lakes where very good fun may now and then be

had by fly-fishing. A man told me on an occasion long ago that he had caught a four-pounder with a chub fly in a weir pool of the Warwickshire Avon. Without vouching for the accuracy of his statement, I will go so far as to say that such a thing is not incredible. Besides perch the gaudy fly will attract pike. One can scarcely fish a salmon fly in some waters without getting runs from pike, but they are mostly small ones. Instances of large pike being killed on the fly are rare, probably because the lure is seldom tried for them ; there are records of such an event, however, and a fish of no less than 30lb. was so caught in Ireland a few years ago.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### LIVE-BAITING FOR TROUT AND PERCH.

The bait-can—Its inconvenience—The best kind—Trout and live bait—Tackle—Baits—The Thames style—"Prodigies of patience"—Float-fishing—Paternostering—Roving—Roving with a worm.

I DO not wish to cast any reflections on Nature and the ordered system by which the half of it obtains its dinner when I confess that I am not very fond of using live small fish to catch hungry great fish. Without having analysed my feelings in the matter very minutely, I am inclined to attribute my disinclination at least in part to the bait-can nuisance. For live-baiting, as this system of fishing is called, a bait-can is essential, and the carrying of it over long distances is a weary proceeding. Still, the angler who wishes to be ready for all emergencies ought to possess one, and to know how to use the bait carried in it. The best kind is, I think, one of oval shape that has a removable interior made of perforated zinc, which can be taken out and sunk

in the river or lake at the end of a string, to the great benefit of the fish inside it, especially in hot weather. Left in the can standing under a hot sun, they would soon die. Such a can is most useful in a large size, say, 14in. long, and it will cost somewhere about 8s. 6d. or a little more. There are other kinds of can which answer the purpose well enough, and on occasion I have pressed a bucket or a watering-pot into service. So long as the utensil will hold water and keep the baits alive, it matters little what one uses.

Having a bait-can and little fish within it, one may angle for trout, pike, and perch, and occasionally catch chub into the bargain. For trout the method is not very much employed, except in the Thames and by an occasional angler in other rivers. Where trout will take a fly it is easily understood that other lures are not encouraged, and where they will not spinning (which is dealt with later) is just as likely to catch them as live-baiting, besides being more artistic work. There are, however, cases in which one cannot spin, and anglers who cannot learn the knack of it, so a few words about live-baiting may not be amiss, especially as what is said applies in the main not only to trout, but also to perch, for which live-baiting is everywhere a reputable pursuit. The novice's bottom-fishing rod

with the shorter top will do for live-baiting, both for trout and perch, and there is not much amiss with the line either. The strength of gut required depends on the probable size of the fish. In a weir-pool where a trout of 5lb. or 6lb. is a possibility, and where there are probably sunken piles, stones, and other hidden dangers to tackle, the gut should be very strong ("1st Padron" is the trade designation for gut of about the right strength); where there are no dangers and the trout do not much exceed 3lb. "fina" is strong enough. For perch the finest undrawn gut is not too fine.

The best baits for both fish are bleak, gudgeon, dace, minnows, and, for trout especially, little bearded slender fish called loach, found under stones in clear, shallow brooks, and captured with difficulty by grown-up persons. But they give excellent sport to those who have not forgotten how to stoop, and who are adroit with their hands or a little net. The size of hook employed varies somewhat, according to the size of the bait, and, I suppose, according to the taste of the fisher. For a small bait like a minnow, which does not often exceed 2in. in length (bigger ones exist and are very deadly, but one can seldom find them except in favoured spots), I prefer a No. 10 or 11 roach hook, For 3in. baits I use a No. 7 or 8 hook, and for 4in.



baits one a size or two larger. I always hook minnows through both lips, and the other baits through the upper lip only. For trout fishing with big baits some anglers use an arrangement known as a "flight," and consisting of a small treble hook or triangle, and a small single hook tied on the gut about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. above it. This is inserted into the bait's lip, while the triangle is allowed to hang loose, or, better, is inserted by one point just under the skin by the back fin. This is the tackle commonly used on the Thames, but some of the best Thames anglers are content with a single hook as described.

There are several styles of live-baiting for trout and perch, adopted originally to meet the needs of different kinds of water. First, there is the Thames trout style, in which a live bleak is drifted down stream on or near the surface to a fish that may be twenty, may be forty, yards off. A very light, well-greased line at least 100 yards long, a little float made of half a wine-bottle cork placed three or four yards above the bait, and very little lead, if any, are required for this fishing. But unless the novice lives by the river I do not recommend him to live-bait for Thames trout. If he will not be warned, let him go to any weir some fine Saturday in May and watch the experts at work, or rather at

attention. He will see prodigies of patience performed, and will learn how far a man can be separated from his bait without apparently losing heart. Personally, I find the game too tedious, and prefer to seek Thames trout either with spinning-bait or salmon fly—I say advisedly “to seek.” The Thames live-baiting method can be modified for other waters. I know, for example, one or two low-arched bridges over small brooks under which no fly could be insinuated. There a live minnow can be drifted down with profit, suspended, say, a foot or 18in. below a small piece of cork. Similarly, one can fish shallow runs under trees or bushes which cannot be approached by other ways. Float-fishing proper is more applicable to perch than trout, and it differs little from float-fishing with a worm, which the novice has already practised. Legering without a float he also knows, and that, too, can be done with live-bait.

But there are two other styles of fishing which have not yet been described, and which are both more interesting than the last two. The first is called “paternostering.” In this no float is used, and the lead (usually shaped like a pear with a little ring on the top) is attached to the end of the cast, while about 18in. above it the hook is joined by its loop to another loop tied in the cast itself, and

standing out at right angles. The hook link should not be more than 6in. long; I prefer it to be only about 4in., and if it is composed of gut rather stouter than the cast it stands out better. Some anglers have two and even three hooks on their paternoster cast, but I prefer one, as there is less risk of tangles, and one is not so prodigal of baits. For trout fishing under a weir with live-bait the paternoster is the best arrangement. One can drop it in quite close to the sill, and the lead on the bottom will hold it steady, despite the superficial rush of water, under which the best fish often lie. Keeping the line fairly taut between lead and rod-top, one can feel a bite in a moment. Then the line should be slackened while one counts five slowly, so that the fish may not feel any resistance, and afterwards the raising of the rod firmly but gently should send the hook home. If the bait is a big one—perch in particular often prefer a 4in. dace or gudgeon to a minnow—one should count ten before striking. The paternoster is a useful tackle for searching odd corners among weeds, round old piles, under walls and banks, and other places where perch congregate, and many anglers rank it above any other.

The method, however, which I prefer to all the rest when it is possible to employ it is what is

known as "roving," also a style of fishing in which no float is required. The cast is arranged as for legering, except that I only have a very small bullet, just enough to take the bait down to the bottom, on which I do not allow it to remain. I aim at keeping the bait in slow but constant motion, now sinking, now being drawn up, now being pulled up stream, now down, working over and through all the places where I expect to find fish. A bite is easily detected by a stoppage of the line, followed by a movement caused by agency other than the rod. Then I count five or ten as the case may be and tighten. Unfortunately, rivers are often too weedy for this style of fishing, but where it is possible it is very fascinating. Often, by the way, I have found a worm used thus\*

\* Worm-fishing for trout has not been mentioned before, partly because it has not been particularly pertinent, partly because in general it is a poor game. When a mountain river is in yellow flood, or just beginning to clear, catching trout with worm in the eddies is an easy matter, too easy indeed. On south-country chalk-streams the worm is the abominable thing, or one of them, the Alexandra type of fly being another. There are, however, circumstances in which worm-fishing is permissible enough, on such an overgrown little brook as that described, for instance; there are plenty of them in the midlands and south. Again, what is called "clear-water worming" is a proceeding which calls for a good deal of skill. It is practised on mountain streams in

extremely effective with shy perch, and with trout in certain overgrown deep brooks, where the fly is often hopeless, it is almost infallible. For roving with a lobworm, a useful tackle is the Stewart arrangement, three hooks tied on to the same piece of gut in a row, one above the other. With them one can strike the moment one feels a fish.

summer when the water is low and the weather hot, and to all intents and purposes it may be described as fly-fishing up stream with a worm instead of a fly. The finest drawn gut is sometimes necessary, and it is no easy matter to get one's worm to the right spot, or to detect a bite when it comes; any stoppage of the line has to be regarded as a bite until one has proved that it is due to a stone or stick. The Stewart tackle may be used, but I prefer Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell's modification of it, which has only two hooks, and is not quite so fond of stones. No lead is wanted on the gut. As for worms, I am not particular, except that I have a suspicion that trout prefer almost any kind *before* brandlings, though the last are excellent for coarse fish. On a low, clear water the novice will find it all he can do to approach his fish unseen, but when he has had some experience he will find the method both fascinating and successful.



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE ART OF SPINNING.

Justification of spinning—Taking on ambition—A four-pounder—Tackle—Rods—Traces—Leads—The Thames flight—How to adjust it—The fan-flight—Artificial minnows—How they should be mounted—Dead baits—How to catch and pickle baits—Salting them—Casting from the reel—Its difficulties—Casting from the coil—Coiling line on the hand.

I HAVE before mentioned the cannibal trout and suggested how he may sometimes be deluded with a big fly, or live-bait, but I now come to what is undoubtedly the best way of attacking him. In its demands upon dexterity and what I may call water-wisdom the art of spinning is not a whit less exacting than fly-fishing, and so far it is entitled to rank with it. Its inferiority from a sporting point of view lies in the facts that a fish hooked on spinning tackle has far less chance of escape than one hooked on a fly, and that the angler is taking advantage of what one must

suppose to be the baser appetites of his quarry. Its superiority to fly-fishing is mainly found in the matter of expediency—one can catch by the one method fish which one cannot catch by the other. This last consideration really justifies in full, always provided that one does not offend against the proprieties by trying to spin in waters where it is not necessary and where “fly only” is the rule, expressed or understood.

Also, I think it well that with the spinning-rod one should take on ambition, and aim not at filling the creel, but at catching the biggest trout in the river. There is a stimulus about this intention which raises spinning to a high level of dignity. The Thames trout fisher who returns a four-pounder as “too small” (there are a few such men) can look with complacency on the lofty standards of the dry-fly man; albeit he uses a spinning bait, he has nothing to learn in point of sportsmanship. But I do not suggest that the novice should vow to return four-pounders; let him catch one first, and then vow—if he feels able. He will not be blameworthy if, as he gazes on the four pounds of spotted perfection, he acquires a sudden conviction that this *is* the biggest trout of the river. Of some it would be, so rash vows are to be deprecated.

Tackle for spinning, as for other methods, should

be adapted to the waters fished and to the size of their trout. On mountain streams, on many of which the art is largely practised during the summer months when the fly has lost its attractiveness, a light rod and moderately fine gut are sufficient, for a three-pounder would there be about the limit of one's ambitions. For the Thames, the Irish lakes, and other places in which one dreams of ten-pounders, a stronger rod and stout gut are a wise precaution. The first case would be adequately met by the novice's fly-rod if he procured a shorter top for it. This will make its action very much stiffer, without depriving it of its spring, which is as important in a spinning-rod as in a fly-rod, though it is not so obvious. Under stress it should bend right down to the hand in a true, though slight, curve. The same rod would be just right for perch also.

For the bigger trout one wants something more powerful. At a pinch the novice could use his bottom-fishing rod with the short top, but it is rather too rigid to be quite satisfactory, and if spinning for big trout is likely to claim much of his attention a special rod for the purpose is worth getting. One of my rods, a split cane, is 10ft. 6in. in length and weighs about 13½oz; another, 10ft. 7in., weighs about an ounce more. The first is a rod of



easy action, with which light tackle can be used, but is quite powerful enough for any trout I am likely to catch; the other is stiffer and stronger, and, with a somewhat shorter top, would do for grilse or light pike work. On the whole, I think the second type of rod would be of more general use to a novice. Made in greenheart, it would be a little heavier, and in whole cane with a greenheart top probably a fraction lighter. Either material will serve, but split cane is the best of the three. The reel and line which the novice bought for his first venture will do quite well for spinning, but it would be wise to have some backing added to the line, as much as the reel will hold.

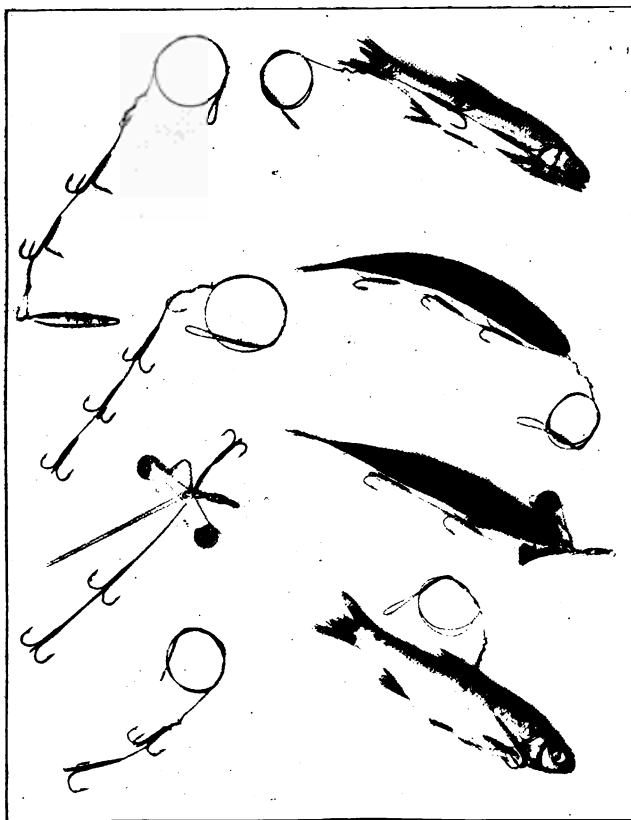
Gut "traces," as they are called, leads, flights of hooks, and artificial baits are the next requirements. A spinning trace is generally tied with three swivels in it, and is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  yards in length with a big loop at the end. My outfit generally contains three or four of these, varying in strength from "refina" to "first Padron." I also have a few with only one swivel at the end, a kind known as a "spring" swivel, to one end of which a gut loop or the metal eye of an artificial bait can be easily attached. About 18 in. above this the trace is joined, not by a knot, but by two loops; this enables me to put a swivel lead on when it is required. One

of the best leads for the purpose is that devised by Mr. Philip Geen, a boat-shaped lead with a revolving ring at each end. But there are other leads with an ordinary swivel at each end which do well enough. The novice will do wisely to get half-a-dozen leads of this nature, and also half-a-dozen leads without swivels for his other traces. It is useful to have two sizes,  $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. and  $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. There are many kinds, the easiest to put on and off being those that have a wire spiral at each end, through which the trace passes. For very light spinning, if lead is required at all, one of the novice's split bullets does as well as anything.

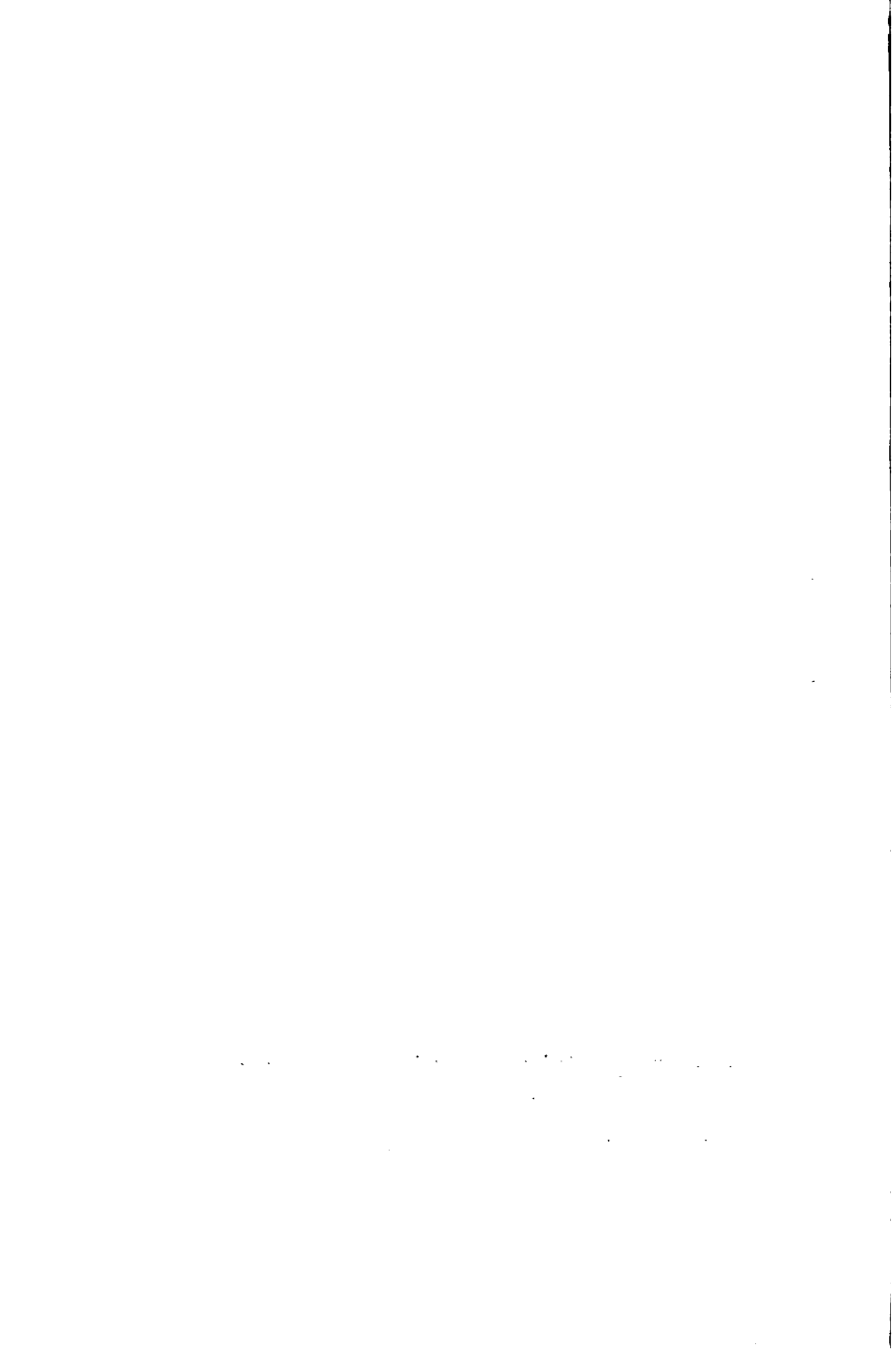
Flights of hooks are very various, but, on the whole, I have come to the conclusion that what is known as the Thames flight is as satisfactory as anything for large baits. It consists of three triangles tied on the gut in a row, with a single or "lip hook" above them. The lowest triangle is inserted near the tail of the bait, and the others, each with a slight strain on the gut at the moment of insertion, along its side, the single hook passing through its lips. The result ought to be a graceful curve in the body of the bait, which makes it turn round and round as it is drawn through the water—"spin," in fact. One can only attain the knack of putting on a bait by practice, and it is well to

remember that the curve ought to be mostly in the tail. Usually the flight is made up with an adjustable lip-hook, which can be moved up and down the gut to fit the size of the bait, and is then fixed by having the gut wound round it two or three times and then caught up in a half-open eye. I do not much like this arrangement, because, though it is convenient, it frays and weakens the gut very much. I now generally use a lip-hook tied on like the triangles and adjusted at the other end—that is to say, if the bait is too big for the tackle, I put the end triangle in rather further from the tail; if it is too small, I do not put it in at all, but begin with the second triangle. For smaller baits one can have the same tackle made up with two triangles, and for minnows with only one. I do not say that this form of tackle is the best, but it is, on the whole, the simplest, and it will do for a beginning. Later the novice may discover that he prefers something else, and then he can discard it.

Another kind of flight is, however, worth mentioning at this stage, the kind on which the bait is made to revolve by means of a pair of metal fans and not by a curve in its body. There are several kinds of fan-flight, all possessing merit, and the novice would perhaps do well to get a couple of, let us



1. "Avon" snap-trolling tackle (Farlow & Co.), unbaited and baited; push lead into mouth of bait, barbed spikes into sides, and lip-hook through tail as shown. 2 Thames spinning flight unbaited and baited. 3. Archer spinning tackle, unbaited and baited. 4. Jardine live-bait tackle, unbaited and baited.



say, Archer spinners for 3in. and 4in. baits respectively. They are easily mounted, and have one advantage, in that the lead is within the bait instead of on the trace. I have an idea that a bait spun by fans is not quite so attractive as one spun by its own curve ; but this may be fancy, for many first-rate spinners prefer the fans. More or less allied to these flights are artificial baits. These are legion, but none are better than two of the oldest and best known, the Devon and phantom minnows. I prefer the first to anything, both for trout and perch, and I generally carry three or four, ranging from 1in. to 2in., and either silver or gold in colouring—a red-gold when it is to be got, which is not always. The type of Devon known as the Watchet is the most durable ; it is armed with one or two triangles at the tail. Phantoms are variously coloured, and I do not know that one is better than another as a general rule, but it is well to have a selection, for the taste of fish varies curiously. For trout and perch 1½ in. to 2½ in. represents the usual range of size.

In buying both Devons and phantoms the novice should insist on having the mounts and triangles strong. Even for a small Devon single gut is inadequate, and the triangles should always be joined to the swivel inside the minnow either by twisted gut

or wire. Also I prefer to join my minnow straight on to the trace (fastening either the loop or the spring swivel at the end to the eye of the swivel in the mount), and not to have a link of gut between the two, such as is generally supplied with the minnow. Often one wants to use a Devon in a hurry, this link of gut does not have time to soak properly, and the result of hooking a good fish is catastrophe. Nowadays my first action after buying a minnow is to cut off the gut. Lastly, one wants a box to carry one's flights and minnows. A small flat tobacco box does well enough, and each flight and minnow should be wrapped in a separate piece of paper, so that the hooks may not get hopelessly entangled. Very fascinating flight-boxes, with separate partitions, strips of cork, and every manner of convenience, can be bought at the shops; but, though pleasant both to look at and use, they are not a necessity.

The town-dwelling angler can, if he pleases, generally buy himself dead minnows, gudgeon, and other baits for spinning from the tackle-shop, and he can get them either fresh or pickled in bottles. Fresh baits are much more effective, and they should be carried in a tin box half filled with bran. But, of course, in hot weather their freshness is a fleeting quality, and one cannot depend on them

for more than one day. Therefore it is useful to have a bottle of pickled baits by one. It is also useful to be able to catch one's own baits at need, and I always carry a cast of fine gut and a few tiny hooks for that purpose. It does not take long to catch a dozen minnows from a shoal, baiting the hook with a small fragment of worm, and using a withy wand as a temporary rod. Bleak and small dace can also be caught in warm weather by a gentle or morsel of bread paste dangled in the water close to the surface, but when one wants them very badly they are surprisingly difficult to hook. Gudgeon have to be fished for on the bottom with a little red worm and float tackle. A gentle stream 4ft. or 5ft. in depth, flowing over clean gravel, is the home of gudgeon, but they are uncertain feeders, and it is not always easy to catch them small enough for trout and perch baits except with a net.

The "cast net" is the best of all, but it is difficult to use, and one gets very wet in throwing it. I have been content to leave it to the keeper, and myself to use a round net about 24in. across, weighted at the bottom and depending from a pole or the end of a boathook by a cord, which is called a "minnow wonder." This is dropped into shallow water where one can see minnows, gudgeon, or



other small fry, and is allowed to rest on the bottom for a space until the little fish are observed to be swimming about over it. Then it is lifted smartly out, and a few baits are sure to come out with it. An angler who lives by the river or spends his holidays by it would find one of these nets decidedly useful. If the novice finds his baits scarce and desires to pickle them himself, so as to be ready for emergencies, he can do so with the aid of formalin (a teaspoonful to a pint of water is about the correct proportion); the minnows or other little fish should be placed in a well-corked bottle full of this solution for a few days, until the liquid gets discoloured. Then they should be removed to another bottle containing fresh solution, and if this again becomes discoloured after about a week there should be a third change. Some anglers add a little glycerin, say, a dessertspoonful, to the solution, and I think this helps to keep the baits bright. The baits after pickling should be firm and tough, but not too stiff. If after a few days in the solution they seem to be too rigid, a little water should be added; if too flabby, a little more formalin.

One more method of preservation, though it is not so lasting, is worth touching on, and that is the use of salt. Spread a thin layer of salt on a strip

of soft cloth (an old duster does very well) about 3in. wider than the baits are long. Lay the baits in a row side by side along this cloth about 1in. apart, cover them with another layer of salt, and then roll them up into a round bundle. In cool weather they will keep fresh and bright like this for some time, but they shrivel up rather. Salted baits are, in my opinion, more killing than pickled ones, but after a time they acquire an ancient and fish-like smell, though they do not appear actually to go bad, at any rate in winter, when I have chiefly experimented with them. In summer I have not demanded of them more than a day or two of usefulness.

Having his stock of baits and knowing how to put them on the tackle, the novice next wishes to use them, and here he is confronted with the difficulty of throwing out a line. The method most in vogue among the experts is casting straight from the reel, whose check-button has to be pushed back so that the drum may revolve freely and without hindrance. The principle of this is simple; one swings the weighted line out in the direction wanted, letting the line go from finger and thumb at the beginning of the movement, the reel revolves obediently, the line runs out, and the bait flies like an arrow to the right spot. As it reaches it one

gradually lessens the speed of the reel's revolutions by braking it with a finger on the rim, finally stopping it dead, so that the bait falls in gently and without commotion. Then one allows it to sink in the water to the proper depth, and afterwards winds it in just quickly enough to make it spin well, and at the same time to keep it above the bottom or the weeds. If a fish takes it, one immediately pushes the button which puts on the check with a disengaged finger, and so plays him.

This is the principle of it, but its application is by no means easy, and I do not recommend the novice to try it at first. His 4in. reel, easy running though it be, is not easy enough for a little bait and a light lead, and the first trial would be very discouraging. He would find his minnow on his hat, in the nettles, in the small of his back, almost anywhere but in the water. But there is no harm in his practising the method in off-times. I began by tying a couple of 1oz. leads onto the end of the line and casting them, on an occasion when I was supposed to be fishing for Thames trout, and practised for about three hours on two successive days. There were some moments at which I concluded that the method was so overrated as to be unworthy of further cultivation (2oz. of lead can deal a very shrewd blow to an unsuspecting person, and the

way in which an "overrun" line can entangle itself is amazing), but in the end I got an inkling as to how it should be done. If the novice could get a friend to give him a first lesson, he would very likely escape some of my sufferings. I do not think it is possible to instruct adequately on paper, but three hints are legitimate—first, to swing the rod gently and steadily, any suspicion of jerk being fatal; second, not to let the point of the rod travel far round, otherwise one loses all power of direction; third, to keep the finger, whichever one uses (I generally use the forefinger of the left hand, which holds the rod behind the reel), always ready for braking purposes, so that one can check the reel slightly at any time; it is sometimes necessary at the very beginning when one uses a heavy lead and bait. But all this will be more applicable when the novice comes to spin for pike.

The method of casting which is known as the "Thames" style, and which is more suited to the present purpose, is that which the novice has already practised to some extent when float fishing for chub; the line is simply pulled off the reel and left in loose coils on the ground, whence it is picked up coil by coil as the bait flies out. With a steady swing it is possible to throw quite a light bait a matter of twenty yards, and with a  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. lead and

4in. dace a cast of forty yards is not out of the question. It is not often, however, that it is necessary to make such a cast as this ; indeed, the shorter the cast in many cases the better, for one has the bait more under control and is at once on better terms with a hooked fish. In some places one need not cast out at all, but can fish with a line no longer than the rod. Where perch or trout lie in deep water close under the bank, under the sill of a small weir, or along the walls that line a mill pool or quay, all one has to do is to drop the minnow in, let it sink, and then draw it along close to the bank or wall. Similarly, on mountain streams trout often lie in some narrow cleft between rocks, where the water is strong and broken, and in such places they will run at a minnow drawn along almost under the point of the rod.

It is in open water that casting becomes necessary, and one has to throw the minnow out and then pull the line back with the hand which is not holding the rod, about 2ft. at each pull. I generally hold the rod with the right hand and recover line with the left, and I always have the forefinger of the right hand under the line as it is being drawn in, so that I can tighten as soon as I feel a run. Between each pull of the left hand I give an additional pull of a few inches with the rod. This keeps the

minnow in motion while the left hand is getting ready for the next pull, and also varies the spin of the bait. I try to recover line as slowly as is consistent with quick spinning of the bait, and also with avoidance of weeds and other impediments. Both for perch and trout the bait ought to revolve quickly, but the more slowly it actually moves along the better, I think. If one sees a trout feeding one ought to cast diagonally a little beyond him, so that the bait in returning will pass just in front of his nose, without his having seen much of the line. One can cast either up or down stream, and in big waters I do not think it matters which one does. In small streams I much prefer to cast up if it is at all possible. The bait has to be drawn in rather quicker to make it spin, but this is compensated for by the fact that both rod and angler are less visible to the trout.

In these small streams, and also when wading in mountain streams, it is often possible to fish with quite a short line, and this can be coiled loosely on the left hand instead of on the ground, a method which avoids entanglements. Five yards of slack line, from reel to first ring, can be held in three coils, the first and biggest being nearest the thumb, the second being rather smaller, and the third smaller still. Allowing for the rest of the

line in the rings and beyond the top ring, this will give one a cast of ten yards at least, which is often ample. With practice one can coil more line on one's hand, but the first loop to go on should always be the biggest, and the first to go off the smallest. Otherwise one gets glorious tangles. Having hooked a fish from the coil, I hold him for a second to get the hooks home, and at the same time let the slack fall so as to wind it back on to the winch, if he gives me time. If not, I play him from the hand. Usually one does get time for winding soon after his first rush.

Lastly, there is what may by courtesy be termed spinning, the practice of trailing (it is often erroneously called "trolling") for big lake trout in Ireland and Scotland. The angler simply sits in the stern of a boat and lets his spinning bait trail thirty yards or more behind while somebody else rows. The tackle and rod must be strong, as a big pike or a salmon is sometimes a possibility. No overwhelming display of skill is demanded of the angler, but the oarsman must know something about the geography of the lake and the nature of the bottom. Trailing may, however, be made something like an art if the angler does his own rowing. and is alone; in fact, there are few kinds of fishing which demand more promptitude and resource.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### PIKE.

Pike or "jack"—Rod, line, and tackle—Wire traces—  
Spinning flight and artificial baits—Live-baiting—Snap-  
tackle — Paternoster — Float and pilots — Trolling—  
Snap-trolling tackle—The drop minnow— A light land-  
ing-net—The gaff and how to use it.

THE young angler has met that hero of legend and story, the pike, or "jack," as it is called by many people when it is under some 4lb. in weight, and at the expense of a perch hook has learnt that this is a fish of prey with very sharp teeth. It also grows to a great size, and affords very fine sport at times in autumn and winter. The principal ways of catching it are three—spinning, live-baiting, and trolling—and the tackle employed as a rule is stronger than anything the novice already possesses. But I am not sure that he need get another rod and line at first, unless he has the run of some water where the fish are known to be heavy. The rod described as suitable for big trout is quite powerful enough for pike up to 10lb.



or 12lb., and if the shorter top is used it will throw a 5in. or 6in. bait at need. Where the fish do not exceed these weights often (few of the more accessible rivers yield a real monster more than once in a way), sport is improved by the use of a light rod and fine tackle, and often a 4in. bait is big enough. But in a water where 20-pounders are a possibility I believe in a big bait, a dace of some 8in. or 9in., and that necessitates a heavier rod and thicker line, the one to bear the brunt of the hard work entailed in casting such a weight, the other to make spinning from the coil pleasanter. A thick line does not kink so much as a thin one, and it reduces the risk of having the fingers cut by the first rush of a big fish. Even if he does not get a new rod, the novice will have to procure a certain amount of tackle, traces, flights of hooks, an artificial bait or two, leads, floats, a "gag," a disgorging, and a gaff or big landing-net. Of old it was essential to have one's traces and flights made up with a substance known as "gimp," a combination of silk and wire. This was considered to be the only material capable of resisting the pike's teeth. Even now gimp is used by nine anglers out of ten. Its disadvantages are that it is too visible in the water, and that it can never be trusted after reaching a certain age. The pike

has a habit of giving one last plunge at the bank or boat side, and it is then that weak gimp is found out.

Great improvements have, however, been effected of late years by experiments with wire, both single and twisted, and one can now get traces which are far less visible than gimp, and at the same time very much stronger. A yard of well-tempered steel wire with a swivel at each end makes an ideal trace, except for a tendency to kink and rust. The first disadvantage is not a great matter, for one can buy a reel containing a good many yards of wire for a small sum, and it takes but a few minutes to make up a new trace; the second can to some extent be avoided by keeping the coiled trace between small pads of blotting-paper on which a little vaseline has been smeared. To apply this single wire to flights of hooks is a harder matter, and I generally now have my flights tied on a short length of twisted wire, which is not quite so liable to kink, and is slightly more supple. One thing should be borne in mind with a wire trace—its end should always be a swivel to whose eye the reel-line can be attached. A loop, as in a gut trace, would very soon cut the line. If the novice cannot get hooks already tied on wire (tackle-makers are rather a conservative race), fine gimp will, of

course, do. It should be of a dark bronze or slate colour for preference.

As a first spinning flight I do not think the novice can improve on the Thames pattern, which he already knows. The hooks must be a good deal larger, but otherwise there need be no difference either in the flight or the way of baiting it. Nor is there any radical difference in the mode of using it. Pike lie in quieter, deeper water than trout as a rule, but are approached in much the same way. One should spin as deep as possible and as slowly, and if one can so arrange the bait that it revolves in wide, slow, sweeps rather than quick, short curves, it is, I think, all the better. Leads can be employed similar to those already described for trout, but in many cases they must be heavier. A split shot nipped onto the trace will prevent a lead with spiral wire ends (the most convenient form) from slipping down too far. I like to have about 2ft. between lead and bait. Artificial baits are innumerable, but nothing really beats the old spoon bait, copper on one side and silver on the other, and about 3in. long. A red-sided spoon is useful sometimes, and other baits worth having in one's box are Devons, phantoms, and wagtails, ranging up to some 4in. in length. Lastly, the novice can, as I have before hinted, now try spinning from

the reel with more hope of making a good job of it.

I am not so fond of live-baiting as of either of the other two methods of pike fishing, but it has its attractions. It can be practised either with paternoster or float. The first differs from paternostering for perch, which has been described, only in degree—everything from bait to lead is somewhat stronger and bigger. Also, many anglers employ a "snap-tackle," an arrangement consisting of two specially constructed triangles, or of a triangle and a lip-hook; the second is perhaps somewhat better for the paternoster (the bait being put on as in trout fishing), the first for float fishing. A large single hook, however, will often give a good account of itself, especially if the pike are "running" at all shyly. A bite, by the way, in pike fishing is generally termed a "run," a relic, no doubt, of old days, when anglers used a gorge-hook, and had to allow the fish first to run with the bait and then to swallow it at leisure.

With modern snap-tackle one saves much time, as one can strike (in pike fishing the word "strike" has its proper place; force is needed to drive the hooks home) almost at once, after counting, say, ten. Even with the single hook one need not wait longer than that; its point stands well away from

the bait, whereas the two points of the old gorge-hook were almost buried. The trace for paternostering can quite well be made of strong single gut, and no swivel is required. The loop to which the loop of the hook is attached should be at least 18in. from the lead. Most anglers have a few inches of finer gut between the trace and the lead, so that if this gets caught up in a snag or in stones the loss incurred is not serious. When fishing with the paternoster it is sometimes wise to move the bait about a good deal, drawing it slowly up towards the surface and then letting it sink again. A pike will frequently be roused from lethargy by a bait which seems to be gradually disappearing from his sphere of influence.

For float fishing I do not care about a gut trace, as I have more than once been broken in the strike, owing, I think, to the extra strain added by the big float. Single or twisted wire is here the material, with the two swivels, one at each end, and the lead above the lower one, and 18in. from the bait, or a little less. Mr. Jardine's snap-tackle is my favourite for float fishing. It consists of two triangles, each with the third point specially bent to hold the bait. The upper triangle is adjustable, like a lip-hook, and its third point is inserted under the back fin of the bait; the third point of the

lower one is inserted either under the pectoral fin or in the corner of the gill cover. The float which one sees in common use is often unnecessarily large. For gudgeon and small dace one does not need a float bigger than a plover's egg, but for very big baits a larger one is sometimes required, more to carry the weight of lead needed to keep the bait down than because the bait is likely to pull the float under, except just at first; then quite a small dace will make the float disappear, but it soon comes up again. If it does not, a pike has probably lent his assistance, and it is well to strike.

Besides the big float, one wants a "pilot float" or two. These are little round cork beads, which are strung on the line above the float. When the bait is cast out they usually fly up the line, and in ideal circumstances, when a long cast has been made, one pilot will be about ten yards from the float and the other twenty. Thus the line is buoyed up and kept from sinking. The ideal is not always to be attained; and sometimes the pilots insist on clinging together like brothers; sometimes they even refuse to leave the big float. But in general they behave fairly well, especially in a side breeze. When pilots are not used, as in a narrow river, it is well to treat the line with Gishurstine or deer's fat,

which will make it float, at any rate for a time. If it has sunk, one must gather it in before striking a fish until one can practically feel him. Casting with a live bait must be done with a steady swing, or the bait will inevitably fly off the hooks.

Trolling\* is an excellent way of fishing deep water close under the bank. The bait, a dead dace or gudgeon, is so disposed that it shoots down head first to the bottom, being drawn up before it quite touches to within a foot of the surface, then being allowed to shoot down again, and so on *da capo*. The tackle consists of a lead inside the bait, pushed

\* Akin to trolling is the "drop-minnow," a thing which it is permissible to mention here, though the method is more employed for perch and trout than for pike. North-country anglers often use a single hook with a leaded shank for this. The gut to which it is attached is threaded right through the bait from mouth to tail with a baiting-needle like that employed for threading a potato in carp fishing, only somewhat bigger. The leaded hook is then in the bait's mouth with its point projecting from one corner. I prefer to use a miniature copy of the pike-tackle with one triangle instead of two. It obviates the risk of a small fish swallowing the bait, because one can strike at once. I regard this as one of the most artistic methods of taking perch, and it is at times one of the most effective. It is also very killing for trout, but only to be employed in waters where bait-fishing is a reputable practice. The manner of working one's minnow or other small fish is identical with trolling; in fact, drop-minnow fishing is trolling on a smaller scale.

into its mouth so that the greatest weight is near the head, and of a triangle or two outside and a lip-hook, which is fastened through the tail. Several kinds of snap-trolling tackle have been devised, and most of them have advantages of their own. It does not matter much what one uses, so long as the bait darts about head first in an erratic and attractive fashion, and so long as there are hooks somewhere about its middle. Its body should be quite straight, or it will try to spin, which is not required. As a rule, a pike seizes it as it is descending, and not as it is being drawn up, and it is not always easy to tell a run from a weed at once. One can soon be sure, however, if the line is seen to be moving off sideways.

Having a run, the novice should strike the hooks well into the fish, and then hold as hard as he dares, lest they come out again. Playing it is like playing any other fish; landing it is rather more difficult owing to its size, and needs either a big net or a gaff. The former is better in some ways, as one can return undersized fish without injuring them.

sometimes carry a pear-shaped net with a very light rim 16in. wide and 22in. long. It is made of two strips of ash, each 38in. long,  $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. wide, and  $\frac{3}{16}$ in. thick, which are screwed together for 14in. at the ends, and then bent round in pear shape and



screwed to the brass arms of the screw which goes into the handle. The net as it hangs is about 30in. deep. Such a rim is very much lighter than the ordinary wooden rim, and I can carry it on an ordinary telescopic handle with a knuckle-joint. It was made for me by a provincial tackle-maker years ago, and has landed some big fish in its time. It is quite large enough for anything up to 12lb.\*

One hint with regard to landing a big fish is worth giving. When he is safe in the net, one should draw, not lift him out. A gaff is a big, sharp steel hook without a barb, which one strikes into a fish when he is beaten, then lifting him out by force. A strong handle and a sharp point (which should be covered with a wine-bottle cork when not in use) are the chief requisites. Telescopic gaffs with their own slings for carrying can be procured—at a price. Gaffing a fish should be done with a firm, unhurried stroke, not with a snatch, and I prefer to get the point in behind the shoulder if possible. Most men, I fancy, gaff underneath. Next it comes to unhooking, and here the gaff is

\* Since this was written, the net, I grieve to say, has landed its last fish. I did the very thing which the novice is here counselled to avoid, tried to *lift* a fish out—a brother angler's 13lb. salmon. The rim of the net collapsed utterly—but we secured the fish.

required to hold the pike's mouth open. The simplest kind is a wire gag, which costs a few pence. Only a very unwise angler will try to use his fingers for this purpose, and he will never do it twice. A long disgorger is useful, and sometimes a big knife. The disgorger should have a weighted knob, so that it may kill the fish as well as take out the hooks. Lastly, a long rush basket does very well to hold the captives, and in it should be found nothing under 4lb. from the ordinary pike waters, or under 8lb. from the choice preserves.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### SALMON AND SEA-TROUT.

The pains and pleasures of salmon fishing—Selecting a rod—Weight of rod and line—Gut and flies—A small stock—Gaff, landing-net, and glove—Waders—Learning a river—"Taking-places"—Running fish—Casting the fly—The Spey cast—Ambidexterity—Fishing the fly—How to land a salmon—Spinning—Spinning with the fly-rod—Spoonbait—Spare triangles—Casting and working the spoon—Bait fishing—Sea-trout—Ways of catching them—Bull-trout—Night-fishing.

LASTLY, with the experience gained in pursuit of other fish at his back, the novice comes to the final stage of freshwater fishing, and perhaps hesitates as to whether he will or will not add a salmon rod with its attendant pains and pleasures, to his armoury. The pains are to be taken into consideration; a fortnight of diligent casting without a single salmon as a reward is no uncommon experience. Also, good fishing is not to be had without heavy outlay; indeed, not always with it, for there are such things as bad seasons, and heart-breaking they are. On the other hand, the pleasures

of it are very great, and the reward, when it comes, magnificent. Salmon fishing is the one branch of the sport in this country in which a man has to use his strength. It is no mean exercise to wield a big rod thigh-deep in a strong river all day ; and it is no light labour to contend with a fish that, at the end of the line, is as strong as you are, for half-an-hour or perhaps more. Men have been beaten by salmon before now through sheer weariness. On the whole, I think the pains of the game (and I have been acutely conscious of them often enough, sometimes to the point of desperation) are more than balanced by the stray gleams of pleasure that are vouchsafed to him who works hard. With the first pull of a fish one becomes a hero, drinking delight of battle ; when the fight is won, one sits amid the gods.\*

\* By the way, the novice may be enjoying these sensations in spring or early summer, in which case let him beware of the kelt, or spent salmon, lest, having killed it, he finds himself sitting in a far less exalted position, for the kelt is protected by law. The ordinary kelt, blotched and hideous, will not bother him ; even the partially-mended kelt, for all its silver, is so big of head and shrunken of flank that it is easily detected. But the "well-mended" kelt is the dickens, the more so because there is, apparently, a kind of degenerate salmon which potters about estuaries instead of going honestly to sea, and then ascends rivers in a half-fed condition, technically clean (since it has been in salt water), but practically

In selecting a rod the novice should consider his strength. A man of slight physique will do more good with a light 16ft. rod than he could with a heavy 18ft. weapon; very likely he would be able to throw a longer line with the little rod; certainly he could fish with it through a longer day. It is better to have a rod below than above one's strength. Few rivers, as a whole, require a rod of more than 17ft., and, though on some of them there are isolated "casts" which need the biggest rod one can handle, it is a mistake to suffer inconvenience for their sake. Use a rod which will cover most of the water, and let the rest go unfished. The weight of a powerful 17ft. greenheart which I use is 41oz.; a split-cane of the same length would probably be an ounce or two lighter, so 40oz. or thereabouts may be taken as a fair weight for a 17ft. rod; a 16ft. rod should weigh

nothing of the kind. The only *certain* method that I know of to convict a well-mended kelt is to examine its vent carefully. Some signs of past inflammation are sure to be visible; if so, the fish is a kelt, and to be returned, for the vent of the clean fish is small and free from any trace of inflammation. But it is not so very long since I made up my mind, from this and other external indications, that a certain fish was a kelt, and another angler of far greater experience confirmed my view. A post-mortem examination and the presence of fairly well-developed roe proved it to be a clean fish. I wish the novice luck.

somewhere about 36oz. The cost of a first-rate greenheart rod would be about 3 guineas, and of a split-cane rod about 10 guineas. The reel is also an expensive thing, and one has to pay at least 25s. for a 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. or a 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. reel which can be trusted. The best of all (some kinds have a lever for adjusting the check, which is often very useful) cost considerably more, but they last a long time with moderate care. Such a reel will hold sixty to eighty yards of backing, with forty-two yards of line.

This last should have the qualities desired in a well-dressed trout line, should be slightly tapered at each end, and should be suited to the rod. One line which I use with the greenheart mentioned weighs about 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ oz., and I should not care to employ a heavier one, though there are such things. Even this is only necessary, I find, in rough weather when one has to cast across or against the wind. I much prefer fishing with another line that weighs about 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. Something depends on the action of the rod. If it is fairly heavy in the top, playing well down to the hand, it will carry a heavy line; but if it is light in the top and stiff at the butt (the pattern used by our ancestors), it will only carry a light one. I have an 18ft. split-cane of the second type which is altogether overweighted by the 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.

line, but carries the other fairly well. On the other hand, I have a powerful little 14ft. rod of well-distributed action, which at a pinch could manage the heavier line, and is well suited by the lighter one. The moral, I think, is that the light top and stiff butt are a mistake. There is yet another type of rod, the Castleconnell, which is very heavy in the top and very thin in the butt. This is a fine weapon in the hands of those who know how to get the most out of it, but it is not everyone's fancy. On the whole, the golden mean is best here, as in most other things.

Salmon gut is expensive, and it is well to acquiesce in the fact and not to economise in this direction. A good three-yard cast of single gut costs about 7s., but it comes rather cheaper to use a cast made up of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  yards of twisted gut and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  yards of single, as most men do. It is also a saving to use "tippetts," that is to say, odd strands of gut with a loop at the end which is fastened to a loop at the end of the cast. The other end of the tippet is knotted to the fly (by the "figure eight" knot if the fly has a gut loop [*see* Plate I, fig. 8.], or the Turle knot if it has a metal eye), and it is not so grave a sacrifice to cut off an inch or two now and again. A good cast will outlive many tippetts. Of the expense of salmon flies I have spoken

before. Buying a large stock of them is a serious matter, for their number is vast. I should advise the novice to be content with a small one at first, and to depend on a few patterns of proved merit. Jock Scott, Thunder and Lightning, Durham Ranger, Wilkinson, Silver Doctor, Dunkeld, Greenwell, and one or two sober-coloured flies, including the March brown—such a list ought to do well enough for any river. Except on a few rivers in spring, flies of 2in. or more are seldom needed, and the range of size I depend on is from about  $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (from bend to loop) to about  $1\frac{3}{4}$ in.

I generally carry a few of the smaller flies dressed on double hooks, as they swim deeper owing to the extra weight, and also, I fancy, hook better. But on the second point I am not quite sure. Nor am I sure whether flies with a metal eye are, as some say, less effective than those with a loop of twisted gut. I prefer the last, but the preference is perhaps based on instinct rather than reason. A good big fly-book, or a tin box or two with spring catches, will hold the flies. A gaff with a sling was mentioned as an accessory for pike fishing. On some rivers the gaff is not allowed, and there one must either net or "tail" one's fish; that is to say, grasp him when played out in the narrow part just behind the tail and so



lift him out. Some men carry a thread glove in their pocket, which they put on before grasping the fish; others simply wet a handkerchief and obviate the slipperiness of the fish with that; personally, I generally grab a handful of sand or fine grit before seizing the fish, and sometimes I have dispensed even with that. A third method is to drag one's fish into very shallow water, get between him and the river, and "kick" him out, but this has obvious objections. For small waters wading, if necessary at all, could be done in stockings. Big rivers generally need wading trousers, and to get the greatest benefit out of these one has to have a very short coat. A cardigan vest is not a bad thing to wear instead of a coat; it is very warm, and can be tucked inside the waders.

When the novice comes to the fishing his first step should be to get someone who knows the river, a gillie or local angler, to take him all over the water at his disposal and point out, not only the pools where salmon lie, but also the exact spots where they "take." A man who knows a pool well will look at it and point out some three or four places where he has risen or hooked salmon, and will probably say that he has scarcely seen a fish in any other part of it. This means that there are three or four places where salmon always lie,

probably because there are big flat rocks at the bottom which give them a sheltered resting-place. They are not necessarily the best looking places, and it is practically impossible for a stranger on a river to find them all for himself. There is one rough pool out of which I have caught salmon which I should not have known for a pool at all if I had not been told. It looks just like a long, shallow rapid, and I should certainly have passed it by as mere trout water but for local advice.

Nine times out of ten the novice may expect to catch his fish in the exact spots where the gillie says they take. The tenth time he may get a salmon or two in unusual places. If a river is unusually full of fish, it is worth while casting in any spot which looks deep enough for them; also, if it is high and the salmon are "running," it is sometimes possible to get an odd one by stationing oneself at the top of some pool with a narrow neck and casting into the run above it. It is a tedious game, but I have had an occasional salmon in this way. The novice will be told that such and such a pool is a "high water" pool, such and such a "low water" one, which means that the first yields sport when the river is high, the second when it is low, and it will be worth his while to bear it all carefully in mind. He should endeavour to mark the

features of each pool, remembering each taking-place by its proximity to a boulder, a bush, or some other noticeable thing.

Casting a salmon fly is like casting a trout fly on a larger scale. The great thing is to allow plenty of time in the back-cast (it is possible to look over one's shoulder and see what is happening), and to make the rod do its share. I hold my rod with the right hand about a foot above the reel and the left hand just below it, and, though the right hand does most of the work, I sometimes find it easier to pick a long line off the water by making the left hand give the butt a slight kick away from the body. This utilises the spring of the rod to jerk the line off the water. A similar but opposite motion of the left hand when the line is extended behind one will propel it forward again with surprising ease. This is, I believe, the system used with the Castleconnell rods, and it is certainly worth adopting when one is tired, as the novice very soon will be; the first day with a double-handed rod is wonderfully productive of aches. When a high wind blowing from one's right side makes casting awkward, one can bring the rod back over one's left shoulder; it is hard work, but it prevents tangles, and keeps the fly away from one's head—a desirable thing.

There is another genus of cast employed when

some obstruction at the angler's back makes ordinary casting impossible. It is called the "Spey" or "switch" cast, and I should say is only to be mastered by those to the manner born. I can get out "a sort of" a line in a way that remotely resembles it, and is sometimes useful, though not a cause for pride. If the novice stands with his back to a strong wind and, having about fifteen yards of line out, raises his rod straight up in the air as high as he can till nearly all the line is out of the water, and then sweeps the point straight forward and down, he will find that the wind catches the bellying line and takes it out for him, the fly travelling last but ending first. I know no better way of acquiring the principles of the cast, and afterwards one can get the rod to do what the wind did, by making it describe a sort of curve in the air. In salmon fishing ambidexterity is of the greatest value, and the novice should by all means practise casting with the position of his hands reversed, *i.e.*, with the left hand above the reel and the rod coming back over the left shoulder. Ability to cast both from right and left doubles one's efficiency. I know, because I can only cast from the right; at any rate, my efforts from the left are of a most rudimentary character.

Fishing the fly for salmon is in essentials much

the same as fishing the big fly down stream for trout, which I have described before. One casts at an angle of about forty-five degrees to the stream and tries to make the fly work over the lie of the fish, "work" and not "drag." I prefer to keep my rod point as low as I can, within a foot of the water when possible, pressing the rubber button at the butt against my body. This makes the fly swim deeper and increases the chance of hooking the fish. When one's fly is well down, the first sign of a rise is generally a pull, which is felt if the line is being held in the hand, and which makes the reel scream if it is not; it need not be held if the check is a strong one. One holds on for a second and the fish is hooked. When the fly is at the top one too often pulls it away from a rising fish because one sees him or his boil and gets excited. Having hooked the fish one holds him as hard as one dares, never lets him have more line than is necessary, and tries to get him out at the rate of a pound a minute. I prefer to gaff a fish for myself unless I am sure of the gillie, and to get the hook in over the back and just behind the shoulder. The rod-point should be lowered as the steel goes home or a breakage may ensue.

Even more is this point to be insisted on if it is necessary to tail a fish. When one is landing

a salmon by oneself, it is wise to play him right out, then to transfer the rod to the left hand and keep the point up and the line taut till the gaff has gone in or the tail has been grasped. Otherwise, even at the last moment the hook may lose its hold and the fish may escape. Keeping the line taut is no easy matter, and, in tailing, the rod-point has to be thrown back over the left shoulder, or there will not be enough line out to enable one to reach the fish. Occasionally it may happen that by reason of a steep bank or an awkward eddy one cannot reach the tail with one's hand; in that case a pretty firm grip may be got by putting the fingers under the gill-cover. Single-handed a novice may well be nervous as to getting his first salmon out, but, if he plays it till it is quite beaten, he will manage the business somehow. The safe landing of one fish will be worth pages of advice to him. The net is so cumbrous an article, if it is to be big enough for salmon, that I would sooner be without it, unless a gillie is with me. In that case it solves all difficulties.

Spinning for salmon is like spinning for trout on a larger scale. The trace and hooks have to be a good deal stronger; indeed, some people use wire traces, such as those advocated for pike. The rod ought to be from 11ft. to 12ft. in length, and some-

what heavier and stronger than that previously recommended for Thames trout, but with a similar action. The reel may be a Nottingham, or one of the expensive casting-reels specially made for salmon, and it should hold at least 120 yards of line and backing, the line being thoroughly well dressed and not too fine. I use the same line for salmon and pike and the same rod, an 11ft. split-cane. Dead baits for salmon, dace, gudgeon, bleak, sprats, or large minnows, should be from 3in. to 4in. long, and are used with least trouble on a fan-spinner, whose hooks should be strong in the wire and mounted on sound twisted gut.

As a matter of fact, however, all these paraphernalia are not really necessary, and I very seldom go to the trouble of taking out a spinning-rod. One can do all that is required on most rivers with a fly-rod and light artificial spinning baits which can be thrown like a fly. A 3in. phantom minnow is not much heavier than a large fly, and after a little practice one can cast it without the least difficulty. A spoon-bait of the old-fashioned pattern, copper on one side and silver on the other, and made of light metal, is also a capital lure for salmon. It should be from 1in. to 1½in. long, according to the height and colour of the water. Even a Devon,

though heavier than either of the two last, can be used like a fly with practice, so long as the angler *remembers* what he is using, and does not force his casting or strain his rod. With so perceptible a weight at the end of the line one can feel distinctly when the line is extended behind one, and so know the exact moment at which to begin the forward cast.

So long as the minnow or spoon has a good swivel of its own, no swivels are required on the cast. I loop my gut straight to the bait, just as if it were a fly, but in heavy water I generally prefer that the cast should be all of fine twisted gut; one is not so liable to crack the minnow or spoon off in the air. The spoon, by the way, should have its split rings made of phosphor bronze, and not of steel, which is brittle and liable to snap in casting; also only one triangle at its tail is necessary to arm it. The shoulder triangle, which is usually sold with it, should be taken off. Further, the angler should have a good supply of spare triangles in view of breakages, which are frequent in salmon-fishing. The wire of the hooks must be rather light or the spoon will not spin properly, and the breaking of a point now and then against a rock or in a salmon's mouth is inevitable. It is the matter of a few moments to open a split ring, take off the broken



triangle, and put on a new one. Lead for this kind of fishing is not required.

A few words may be said about the method of using one of these baits on a fly-rod.\* One fishes a pool down in much the same way as if the lure were a fly, but it is not necessary to cast at quite so acute an angle, and therefore a shorter line can be used, which is a decided advantage. Some men work the bait in short jerks like a fly, but I do not think this is necessary. I have found it quite enough to cause the bait to sweep slowly and steadily across the river by bringing the point of the rod round from left to right or right to left, as the case may be. A salmon will sometimes take with a bang, sometimes very quietly, so that it feels more as if one were caught up on a rock. This last contingency does not often arise, by the way, because without lead one is never fishing deep enough to touch the bottom, and projecting rocks are all one has to fear. In this respect the method has a decided advantage over spinning of the ordinary kind. Its shortcomings, however, are

\*Practically all that is said here is also applicable to trout-fishing, rod, bait, tackle, etc., being, of course, modified to suit the circumstances. I have had many enjoyable hours with perch, too, casting some light spinning bait with a fly-rod.

noticeable in fishing dead slack water ; there it becomes very difficult both to cast the bait and to make it spin for any distance. Next to fly-fishing, I consider spinning with a fly-rod the most sporting and interesting way of catching salmon.

The last way of catching salmon is by means of bait, either lobworms or boiled prawns and shrimps. I have never caught a fish myself with any of the three, though I have attempted to do so occasionally, and have seen other men's efforts crowned with success. The prawn or shrimp is usually mounted on a special tackle consisting of two small triangles, to which it is bound by a few turns of very fine copper wire. For dead water a little lead wire may usefully be wrapped round the shank of the lower triangle, and the prawn can then be fished like a drop-minnow. In a stream it is allowed to trickle along the bottom, as is the worm mounted on a strong Stewart tackle (or bunch of three or four worms on a big single hook). On the question of bites I cannot speak usefully ; what few have come my way have not advantaged me anything, since in nearly every instance I supposed them to be connected with a stone or a stick rather than a fish, only discovering the truth when it was too late. Bait-fishing is regarded without favour on many rivers, but when the novice is in a land where it is

"the thing" he will not find it beyond his powers if he understands the rationale of bottom-fishing for other fish. There are portions of most streams where the prawn or worm is the only thing likely to do any good—deep, still flats, eddies, and the like—but it is a pity to use either in "fly water."

Of sea-trout\* fishing it is not necessary to say very much since the methods described for trout and salmon, especially the use of "the big fly," are most of them applicable in certain circumstances to sea-trout. When large (in some waters they run up to something like 10lb., and have been known to exceed 20lb. in rare cases) they may be regarded as small salmon and fished for accordingly with a 14ft. or 15ft. rod, fine grilse gut and small salmon flies;

\* Young anglers, and old ones too for that matter, are sometimes puzzled to say whether a fish which they have been fortunate enough to catch is a small salmon or grilse or a large sea-trout. The simplest method of finding out is, as has been recommended by Mr. G. A. Boulenger of the British Museum, to count the number of scales in an oblique row from the posterior margin of the adipose fin to the plainly visible line which runs along the middle of the fish. The line of counting slants *away from* the tail. The salmon, which is the bigger-scaled fish, usually has from nine to twelve scales in the row while the sea-trout (or brown trout) has never less than thirteen, usually fourteen or fifteen. The bull-trout can as a rule be easily known by its tail, which is convex, so much so that in places it has won the name of "round-tail." It is bigger-headed and coarser in appearance than the sea-trout.

when small (there is in most sea-trout rivers an autumn run of herling, or sea-trout grilse, averaging not much more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ lb) they are best attacked with ordinary trout tackle and small flies. A rod of 12ft. or 13ft. which can be used with two hands is perhaps the best all-round weapon for sea-trout. The typical sea-trout fly is, like the loch fly mentioned earlier, a compromise between the salmon and trout flies, and I need not enlarge upon it. Half-a-dozen standard patterns in addition to his other flies will be ample for a novice. Spinning baits and the worm are also killing for sea-trout when the water is at all high and coloured, a gold Devon with a tinge of red in it being about the best of the artificials. It has also of late been proved that, both in lochs and rivers, sea-trout will sometimes take a dry fly. For dead low water this is worth remembering.

There are two kinds of sea-trout, though only the one which is usually known by that name (*Salmo trutta*) is of much use to the angler. The other is the bull-trout (*Salmo eriox*), a big, curious fish which does not give nearly so much sport as it should. It is principally found in the rivers of the north-east coast, such as the Tweed and Coquet, but also ascends some streams of the south and of Wales. A 20lb. bull-trout is not at all uncommon

and 7lb. or 8lb. would be about the usual size in a river like the Coquet. Except when they are kelts or when they have just entered a river they are bad risers, but they take a spinning-bait a little better than a fly. Being big and strong withal they are best fished for with salmon tackle. I have an idea that, like sea-trout (which on many rivers in low water are principally caught at night), they would rise very much better after dark. At the approach of twilight they seem to wake up, and I have then seen them rushing about on shallow flats just like brown trout on the feed. Also if a salmon-fisher catches a bull-trout on the fly at all, it generally happens in the evening. But I have not had an opportunity of trying for them at night while the weather was still reasonably warm and the undertaking feasible, and night-fishing has never made a very strong appeal to me.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CONCLUSION.

“Where?” — Difficulty of getting fishing — Some useful guide-books—A word of caution—Enquiries—Local tackle-dealers—Fishing-clubs and societies—Free fishing—Hotel waters—Fishing by permission.

ONCE thoroughly entered to the sport the novice will not, I suspect, be long in joining that large section of the brotherhood which is perpetually asking “where.” He will find that England is a more crowded country than he had perhaps supposed, and that the greater part of its waters is guarded jealously against intruders. He will possibly be tempted to inveigh against a system of plutocracy which makes it impossible for him to indulge in his harmless diversion in every tempting stream that meets his eye ; he may even feel an impulse to join in agitations for “free fishing,” such as arise from time to time when landlords assert their rights in some locality or other. He may in short soon find himself a very aggrieved person. Even if he does not, he will almost certainly be a puzzled one,

unless he happens to be wealthy or to have friends who are both wealthy and generous. Therefore, he will ask "where" with the rest of us.

To this question in some of its forms there is literally no answer. The man, for example, who demands "first-rate salmon or sea-trout fishing *free*" is propounding a riddle without a solution. Of first-rate salmon and sea-trout fishing there is very little, and none of that little is free; indeed none but rich men need bother their heads about it. Practically the same thing can be said of first-rate trout fishing, especially in southern streams, which many of them have a rental value of some hundred pounds per mile. Nor is coarse-fishing of high merit to be had for the asking; it has a definite value too, and one which is increasing.

But if a man asks where he can get fishing of a quality ranging from fair to moderate, it is possible to give him some sort of answer. There is a certain amount of literature dealing with the geography of obtainable fishing, not so much as one could wish, but enough to be useful. First there is "The Angler's Diary" (Horace Cox, price 1s. 6d.), a valuable annual publication, which contains a vast amount of information about waters all over the kingdom. Next there is the "Sportsman's Guide to Scotland," (Watson Lyall, price

1s.) ; this useful book appears twice every year, and is of great service to anyone who wants to get an idea of fishing quarters in Scotland. Ireland is very ill-served in the matter of modern piscatorial guide-books but a recent little volume, "The Land of Lakes" by E. S. Shrubsole (published by the Midland Railway Company), may be of use in exploring the waters of Donegal. "Highways and Byways in Donegal and Antrim" (Macmillan) also touches on fishing to some purpose ; its author, Mr. Stephen Gwynn, M.P., is a keen and skilful angler. A few references to likely fishing resorts are also to be found in Mr. J. Harris Stone's "Connemara" (Health Resort Publishing Company), but they do not bulk very large in the volume. For the rest the novice must either make local inquiry or depend on articles published from time to time in "The Field," "The Fishing Gazette," "The Angler's News," and other sporting papers.

England and Wales are blessed with a certain number of local guide-books which sometimes contain useful information about fishing. Of more ambitious volumes of recent date Mr. W. M. Gallichan's "Fishing in Wales," and "Fishing in Derbyshire" (Robinson) are to be commended. Mr. G. A. B. Dewar's "South Country Trout Streams" ("The Angler's Library," Lawrence and



Bullen) is an interesting and useful little book, though the rivers of which it treats are not as a rule likely to prove a happy fishing-ground for the ordinary man, being, as has been said, things of price. "Exmoor Streams" by C. F. Wade (Chatto and Windus) gives a good idea of the fishing to be obtained in that delectable part of the country. Mr. F. H. Amphlett's "The Thames, Where to Fish it and How," is a useful guide to the Metropolitan river. The volumes on Wales in the "Highways and Byways" series (Macmillan) from the pen of that good angler Mr. A. G. Bradley are enriched with a good deal of fishing information happily conveyed. Mr. P. Geen's "What I have seen while Fishing" (Fisher Unwin) also gives some topographical information both about Scotland and Ireland. There are valuable pages also in the books of Mr. J. W. Martin ("The Trent Otter") describing reaches of the Ouse, Trent, and other East Anglian waters, and there is a good deal of detached information scattered about in the angling library generally, while articles answering the question "Where?" are frequent in the sporting press.

A word of caution, however, with regard to fishing guide books and literature is not out of place. However accurate the information in a

book or article is at the date of its publication, it does not follow that it will be accurate five, or even two, years later. Change is a melancholy but insidious thing, and conditions are apt to alter materially from lustre to lustre. Therefore, before staking a holiday on the faith of a printed page, an angler will always do well to make inquiry as to the permanence of the conditions of which he has read.

Of whom, he may justly ask, shall he inquire? The natural person to know about the state of things is the local tackle-maker. Every town of any importance, besides many of no importance, has its tackle-maker or dealer, and his address can easily be gleaned from a county directory, at which most people can get in one way or another. Some tackle-dealers advertise in the sporting papers, moreover, and so give their addresses; and a few of them give valuable notes about the fishing in their districts in the catalogues which they issue. Information so obtained may, of course, be a little coloured by patriotism, and probable baskets may possibly be estimated from the doings of local experts with whom a stranger would not be able to vie, but, on the whole, I have found provincial tackle-dealers uncommonly good fellows and have owed them many debts of gratitude for "information received." I need, perhaps, hardly say that the

enclosure of a stamped envelope for the reply is a piece of courtesy not wasted when one is making inquiries.

All this, however, relates more to the angler who is seeking fishing for his holidays. I now come to the case of him who wants to find something more permanent, some water to which he may repair on a Saturday or for a week-end, as the modern phrase is. The solution of this problem lies, to put it briefly, in the angling society. Nearly all our great cities possess many angling clubs or societies; most of the smaller towns which lie anywhere near fishing have at least one. Their importance as a factor in angling economics cannot possibly be over-estimated; indeed, I think the future of angling, so far as the vast majority of its votaries is concerned, lies with them and them alone.

Their scope varies, some few being purely social organisations, others apparently existing for the purpose of holding competitions at which prizes are fished for, others again renting waters for the use of their members, and yet others, such as the Thames Angling Preservation Society, performing the altruistic function of protecting and improving free waters for the benefit of anyone who likes to fish them. Lastly, most of the clubs in any large centre, such as London, Birmingham or Sheffield,

combine together in a federation, whose object is the general welfare of the fisheries and fishers in its district, which negotiates with railway companies for facilities to anglers, keeps a watch upon fishery legislation, and otherwise justifies itself.

For the novice, the third class of society, that which rents water, is of most immediate importance, because he will be practically dependent on it for his fishing, unless he is content with "free fishing." Of waters in a pristine state of freedom I have no opinion at all. Man is so constituted that he must destroy things at once; he will not spare to-day so that he may destroy to better purpose to-morrow; his dealings with nature are based on his primitive creed that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." As for rivers, they are simply places into which he can conveniently throw his rubbish, after he has extracted all the fish he can by such means as are in his power. The result is that free fishing is everywhere badly treated, except in a case like the Thames where associations exist for the purpose of enforcing the law and giving the water some measure of protection. One has only to consider the state of the public part of the Norfolk Broads and rivers, to see what comes of free fishing. By nature they are probably the most productive waters in England but free fishing

is fast destroying them. So glorious is the freedom there, that there is not as yet even a close season for breeding fish enforced, and though public feeling is changing with regard to this, there still appears to be a considerable number of local wise-acres who do not see any necessity for such a thing. Unless Broadland gets a close season very soon, the fishing there will cease to be a thing of any account.

For these reasons I strongly advise the novice not to depend on free fishing, but to join some society or other which has fishing of its own. Club waters, of course, are not the best waters; they are too much fished to provide the cream of sport. As a rule, however, they are very well managed and yield a surprising number of fish every year. Well-considered rules governing the size and number of fish to be taken, efficient keepering, and judicious restocking can do wonders for even a hard-fished water. The subscription varies from a few shillings in some provincial society up to twenty pounds or more in one of the select clubs which rent really good water, clubs like the Driffeld, Dorchester, Wilton or Leintwardine, which fish respectively the Driffeld Beck, the Frome, the Wylye and the Teme. These, and a few more like them, are by no means easy to get into; a man has, as a rule, to put his

name down, and wait his chance of election for a considerable time, when a vacancy in the limited list of membership occurs.

The societies of great cities are also in some cases limited in their numbers, but vacancies are more frequent in them, and membership is not so difficult to attain. The subscriptions to the leading angling clubs which rent water, such as the True Waltonian, Piscatorial, Gresham, Friendly Anglers, Highbury, Thorney Weir, City of London Piscatorial, Palmerston, and Blenheim societies, vary from about a guinea and a half to about ten guineas. The leading provincial societies make a somewhat similar demand on their members. Most of the important rivers in England and Wales are preserved in some part of their course by some club or other, and fishing can usually be obtained in that part, either by joining the club or by taking out tickets as its rules permit, for the day, week or month.

If an angler of moderate means lives in a district where there is water, but no club or society to take advantage of it, he would do well to try and start one, or, failing that, what is called a "syndicate," the combination of a few men to take a piece of water, look after it, and fish it. There are still in many parts of the country neglected streams which

could be rented for a small annual sum, and which with a little trouble and outlay could be converted into excellent fishing. Even a small brook is capable very often of producing a fine head of trout if a little pains were given to developing it.

Lastly there are hotel waters and waters on which "leave is sometimes given" as the ambiguous phrase hath it. Waters of the first class have come in for a deal of abuse one way and another. A man goes to a hotel on the strength of an advertisement, gets no sport, and afterwards speaks his mind with emphasis. But I have sometimes found that he is one of those whose requirements are somewhat large; he wants good sport all day and every day irrespective of the water or weather; occasionally, too, he has an objection to paying hotel prices. In some cases I have heard men abuse hotels on whose water I have enjoyed myself very much, getting quite as much sport as I expected. Therefore, it is obvious that men's standards differ. But, according to my own standard, I am prepared to say that much of the hotel fishing of which I have had experience is quite good enough to satisfy an angler of moderate ambitions. It is a wise thing not to demand too much of any water, hotel or other.

With regard to the water on which "leave is

sometimes given," I am almost tempted to say to the novice, "Don't," but that would perhaps be too sweeping. There are some proprietors who really do give leave on receipt of a polite and proper application; they do not perhaps fish themselves, and are pleased that others should do so under certain restrictions, one being that they should reveal their identity and fitness for the privilege. But there are others whose patience has been exhausted by the constant demands of strangers, and whose assent to further requests for permission is at best a doubtful thing. To be met with a brief "*non possum*" is not pleasant, and it is scarcely redeemed by the reason (if any) generally given, that "Mr. X. has been so overwhelmed by applications for leave that he has found it necessary, *etc.*"

When I was myself in the ardent state of novitiate, a few refusals of this kind soon convinced me that applications to perfect strangers were sometimes ill-judged. And one or two acquiescences helped to this end. I remember once being given two hours' fishing—by a lady! And on another occasion I was restricted to a single hour! Being a boy then, I did not see the humour of it to the full, but in both cases took advantage of my opportunities for what they were worth, regretting chiefly



the fact that stern people were on the look-out to see that I did not exceed the minutes of grace.

No, on the whole I advise the novice to cultivate independence and not to worry strangers with letters. If he has introductions it is another matter, and he may take the good things offered to him with a thankful heart. Also he is more likely on the whole to meet with a stroke of luck by not being obtrusive. One of the best days I ever had with trout was offered to me by a complete stranger who noticed my rod and basket and entered into conversation on the strength of them. Such a day unexpectedly given is worth several extracted from some luckless landowner by sheer importunity.

Even without such gleams of good fortune, an angler may still do very well, if he goes about it in the right way. His society's water will serve to keep him happy and amused during his working time, and during his holidays he can enjoy himself farther afield simply by paying a small subscription to some other society or by staying at some fishing inn. So, though his basket may generally be light, he can be his own man and all the better for it. *Piscator non solum piscatur*; it is after all a commonplace nowadays to say that full creels are not the whole of it. Health, happiness, peace,

and meditation, these are more than ever necessary to complete our lives, and the pastime of angling, rightly used, will give them all. If it gives a few good fish as well from time to time, so much the better, but it is not a failure without them. I write these words of ending after two days which have been as blank as days can be—absolutely fishless, yet full of enjoyment. I can wish the novice no better fortune than that he may be able to get as much pleasure even from blank days as I can. And I wish him the best.





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